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UNDER THE
SFORZA

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FRANCESCO SFORZA
MEDALLION FROM A DOORWAY
Certosa of Pavia

A HISTORY OF
MILAN
UNDER THE SFORZA

BY

CECILIA M. ADY

EDITED BY

EDWARD ARMSTRONG

WITH TWENTY ILLUSTRATIONS AND A MAP

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PREFACE

A HISTORY of Milan, under the House of Sforza, can hardly incur the charge of being superfluous. While Rome, Florence and Venice have each found English historians, and while fresh books on Renaissance Italy appear every day, no English writer has told the story of the Sforza as a whole. The scant attention which has been given to the history of Milan may be compared with the brief visit which the traveller pays to the capital of Lombardy before he presses on to other Italian cities. Yet those who pause to look will find, hidden under the bustle of a modern commercial town, numerous relics of an age when the Duchy of Milan was deemed the first State in Italy. To the student of history the rule of the Sforza presents one of the most characteristic examples of an Italian tyranny at the time of the Renaissance.

Only eighty-five years elapsed between the day when Francesco I. made himself master of Milan and that on which his grandson and namesake died childless. Those years, however, are among the most vivid in the world's history. Six Sforza Dukes in all wielded the sceptre of Milan. Of them two, if not three, might be taken as representative types of the many-sided Renaissance despot. Francesco I., the greatest soldier of his day, forms the pre-eminent example of the despot skilled in the arts of war, uniting in his person all those qualities which make the founder of a State. Lodovico Il Moro is no

less remarkable in his own sphere. As a diplomatist, as an economist and as a patron he proved himself supreme in those arts of peace which have won for the Italian prince his peculiar place in history. If the peasant *condottiere's* son created the Sforza dynasty, Il Moro made the Court of Milan famous for all time as the home of splendour and of genius. For those, moreover, who would not consider the portrait gallery complete if it did not include a typical villain, there is Galeazzo Maria Sforza. Round his neck contemporary writers have hung as sensational a list of crimes as could well be devised.

My task in tracing the history of the House of Sforza has consisted chiefly in weaving together masses of scattered material. While the latest connected history of Milan is more than fifty years old, detailed studies of certain episodes, illustrated by documents hitherto unknown, are constantly appearing both in book form and in the chief Italian periodicals, notably the *Archivio Storico Lombardo*. Among those which have been especially useful to me are Count Pasolini's well-known monograph on Caterina Sforza, M. Pélissier's exhaustive works on Louis XII.'s occupation of Milan and the diplomacy which preceded it, and articles which have appeared in the *Archivio Storico Lombardo* by Signor Ghinzoni, Signor Verga and others. Such original research as I have attempted relates to the period when published material is most scanty, namely, to the reigns of the two last Sforza Dukes. The documents which are to be found in the Milanese Archives throw light upon the position which Il Moro's sons held in the Duchy, while they confirm the conclusions gleaned from the chance references of contemporaries as to the personal character of Massimiliano and Francesco II. Turning to the

artistic side of the Sforza period, we find a wealth of literature, beside which the amount of purely historical material seems small. Here I owe much to the work of Signor Luca Beltrami, who, by his histories of the great monuments of the Duchy, such as the Castello of Milan and the Certosa of Pavia, has illuminated one of the most important aspects of Sforza rule in Milan. With regard to the chapter on "Social Life," I am conscious that the life described is that of the Court rather than that of the city. Yet at a time when the Court absorbed all the most enlightened elements of society, the mist which hid the lives of the masses is hard to pierce. Only at rare intervals is the veil drawn aside to reveal the citizens of Milan, tenacious, above all else, of the honour and independence of their city-State, loyal, therefore, to the last to the Sforza Dukes who enhanced the prestige of that State while they formed the surest guarantee for its autonomy.

In conclusion, I must thank those who have aided me personally in my task, most especially Mr. Armstrong, both for his help and advice as Editor, and for the assistance which I have derived from his unpublished notes and lectures. My thanks are also due to Conte Francesco Malaguzzi-Valeri (Ispettore della Brera) for the kindness and courtesy with which he placed his knowledge at my disposal during my visit to Milan, and to Mr. Claude Phillips, Mr. C. F. Hill, Mr. Beattie and Dr. F. Gatti for allowing me to make use of illustrations under their charge or in their possession.

C. M. A.

OCKHAM, *March, 1907*

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A HISTORY OF MILAN

UNDER THE SFORZA

CHAPTER I

SFORZA AND HIS SON—SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE

(1369—1433)

IN the little Romagnol town of Cotignola, on 28th May, 1369, the founder of the House of Sforza first saw the light. At that time Milan had not yet become a Duchy, although under the joint rule of Bernabò and Galeazzo Visconti, it was fast being welded into a State. The Italian soldier of fortune, moreover, was not yet a factor in politics. Only in 1379 did the Company of S. George, consisting purely of Italians, fight and win its first battle against the French mercenaries, who were threatening Rome in the interest of the anti-Pope. Hence the birth of the fifth son of Giovanni Attendolo excited no interest beyond the bounds of Cotignola. None could tell that the boy himself would become the chief of Italian *condottieri*. Still less could it be imagined that his son would one day mount the throne of Milan. Nevertheless, in the course of the next century both these feats were accomplished, and in Francesco Sforza's recognition as Duke of Milan the Italian soldier of fortune won his crowning triumph. During the years that intervened the peculiar characteristics of the *condottiere* system were developed, chief of which was the desire of every mercenary captain to make himself an independent prince. Not only did he need a State to support himself and his troops in time of peace, but it was the natural instinct of the hired soldier to aspire to the position of his employer, in order to become, in the words of

a Sforza chronicler, "hammer and not anvil". Thus the partition of the Duchy of Milan among his generals, on the death of Gian Galeazzo Visconti, and the dominion which Braccio won for himself round Perugia, foreshadowed Francesco Sforza's acquisition of the most powerful State in Italy. From the point of view of the *condottiere*, it was a triumph. From the point of view of the prince, it formed a striking illustration of Machiavelli's assertion as to the danger of trusting to mercenary arms. If your hired captain is skilful, Machiavelli declares, he will always work for his own ends; while, if he is a bad soldier, he will ruin you in the ordinary way.

The rise of the House of Sforza from the camp to the Duchy is a matter of history. Popular tradition adds a still more romantic element to the story by making Muzio Attendolo of peasant birth. One day, runs the legend, when a troop of mercenaries were riding through the flat marshy country between Ravenna and Bologna, they came upon a peasant lad who was cutting wood near his native town of Cotignola. Struck by the boy's appearance, they called out to him to join them. He replied by throwing his axe into the branches of an adjacent oak: "If it stays, I will go," he cried. "The axe stuck in the tree, and Sforza went forth to found a line of Dukes."¹

As is the fate of all popular stories, the legend of the axe has been declared to have no foundation in history. Yet, unlike the majority of legends, it is known to be practically contemporary. As early as 1411, Pope John XXIII., furious at Sforza's desertion of his service for that of King Ladislas of Naples, caused his enemy to be depicted hanging from his right leg and holding an axe in his hand, while the following lines were attached to the picture:—

Io sono Sforza, villano della Cotignola, traditore;
Che dodici tradimenti ho fatto alla
Chiesa contro lo mio onore.
Promissioni, capitoli, patti haio rotti.²

¹ Symonds, J. A., *Renaissance in Italy*, vol. i.

² "I am Sforza, peasant of Cotignola and traitor. Twelve times have I betrayed the Church, contrary to my honour. Promises, treaties, compacts have I broken." To be hung from the right leg was a traitor's punishment.

Freely circulated in the camp of Sforza's rival, Braccio, the story is told by three chroniclers of a slightly later date. It was also known to the later members of the House of Sforza. When Francesco Sforza II. was exhibiting the marvels of the Castello of Milan to Paolo Giovio, the Duke remarked with a smile, "We owe it all to that famous axe, which our ancestor threw into the branches of a tree, and which, to our good fortune, stayed there". There is, moreover, no inherent improbability in the legend, as many of the most famous *condottieri*, including Carmagnola and Piccinino, were undoubtedly of peasant origin. On the other hand, two contemporary biographers of the first Sforza, whose account is followed by Corio, give a version of their hero's youth, in which neither the axe nor his low birth occur. Alberico da Barbiano, the founder of the Company of S. George, came from the village adjoining Cotignola. According to these writers, the fame of his great neighbour so inspired young Muzio that he ran away from his father's house when only twelve years old, in the hope of winning similar glory. He fell in with some troops belonging to a Captain of the Church, Boldrino da Panigale, with whom he remained four years. During that time he won the notice of his hero, Alberico da Barbiano, who, impressed by the lad's great strength and fiery nature, nicknamed him "Sforza," and promised to have him trained as a soldier. When the four years were over, Muzio returned to Cotignola to visit his parents. This time he was not allowed to leave home empty-handed, and his father sent him back to the camp with four fully equipped horses, a gift which must have involved considerable wealth on the part of the donor.

The recent researches of Professor Gaetano Solieri, in the archives of Cotignola,¹ have made a strong case for this second version of the story. His evidence shows that the Attendoli, far from being poor peasants, ranked among the leading families of their native town. As early as 1226 an Attendolo acted as ambassador for the neighbouring town of Bertinoro, when it made its submission to Bologna. Giovanni Attendolo, Muzio's

¹ Prof. Gaetano Solieri, *Le Origini e la Dominazione degli Sforza a Cotignola*. Bologna, 1897. *L'Antica Casa degli Attendoli Sforza in Cotignola*. Ravenna, 1899,

father, married Elisa Petrocini, who came of a well-to-do citizen family, and it is probable that her husband's social status was very much the same as her own. When Sir John Hawkwood enlarged and fortified Cotignola in 1376, the only lands suitable for his purpose belonged to Giovanni Attendolo, who consented to yield them in exchange for a yearly tribute. Meanwhile Giovanni was occupied with the building of his own family mansion, which appears to have been one of the few houses in Cotignola that were not made of wood. A document of the year 1412 records a great fire in the town, which destroyed everything "save the church, the house of Sforza, the house of Lorenzo Attendolo, and two or three houses near them, which did not burn because they were of stone". Not only were the Attendoli comparatively wealthy, but they were also powerful and war-like. The peace of Cotignola was constantly broken by their feud with the Ghibelline family of Pasolini which came to a crisis in 1388, when Bartolo Attendolo and Martino Pasolini aspired to the hand of the same young lady. Sforza, who was spending the winter at home in *condottiere* fashion, threw himself into the fight that ensued. Two of his brothers were killed and he himself was badly wounded. Finally matters reached such a pitch that those of the Pasolini who had most deeply offended the Attendoli decided to quit Cotignola, while those who remained changed their name in order to escape the enmity of their rivals.¹ The Attendoli were a numerous race, and Elisa Petrocini had no less than twenty-one children, all of whom seemed born with a natural aptitude for warfare. Fifteen of Muzio's brothers and cousins became soldiers of some repute, the most celebrated among them being Micheletto Attendolo, who raised the mercenary standard at the same time as his cousin. He afterwards won distinction as Captain-General of the Venetian forces, in which capacity he fought against Francesco Sforza on more than one occasion. With all this the Attendoli were rough, even barbaric, in their habits. According to Giovio's description,² Sforza's home in Cotignola was more like a camp than a private house. The walls were

¹ Count Pasolini, *Caterina Sforza*, vol. iii., Docs. 1-3.

² Paolo Giovio, *Vita di Sforza*, Trad. L. Domenichi. Venezia, 1558.

hung with shields, lances and coats-of-mail instead of with tapestries. For beds there were great wooden couches without hangings or coverings, upon which a band of soldiers could throw themselves. Instead of sitting down to well-cooked meals, every one ate standing of such rough food as the men-at-arms could prepare.

In the face of this evidence it seems impossible to maintain that the Attendoli were peasants. "Considering their town and country," as their own historian Marco Attendolo says, they were rich and influential. Yet by the side of Braccio, a Perugian noble, the native of an obscure townlet in Romagna might appear little better than a peasant. Sforza's uncouth appearance and inability to write so much as his own name, seemed to confirm the rumours as to his low birth, which were circulated by his enemies. The story of Sforza's peasant origin and, according to Solieri, the legend of the axe arose in Braccio's camp. On this last point, however, there seems still room for doubt. Rough and uncivilised as the Attendoli were, there is no great improbability in Muzio being employed, when a boy of twelve, to cut wood. The argument that, at that age, no one but a mythical hero would have the strength to throw an axe into a tree is hardly convincing. There is no reason why those who wish to believe the story should not do so, and they will find themselves in good company. "Let us keep the legend of the axe," writes Count Pasolini,¹ the historian of Caterina Sforza. "The epic of the Sforza begins with it, and I believe it and hope it for the sake of the love that I feel for them and for Cotignola."

For some fifteen years Sforza fought beneath the banners of Alberico da Barbiano, side by side with his future rival, Braccio da Montone. Braccio was less than a year older than Sforza, and it was probably in a burst of boyish affection that the two agreed always to wear the same colours and devices. Even when Braccio and Sforza became the leaders of rival schools of soldiery, this practice was still maintained, until at length the difficulty of distinguishing his men from the enemy

¹ In a letter to Prof. G. Solieri. *Cf. op. cit., Origini e Dominazione, etc.*

forced Braccio to adopt a new device. Among the great freemasonry of the Italian *condottieri* there existed friendships and enmities between individual captains which bore no relation to the sides upon which they fought. Hence the years of conflict between Sforzeschi and Bracceschi never entirely killed the friendship which their leaders had formed as boys. When during the Neapolitan Succession Wars Queen Joanna of Naples wished to win back Sforza to her side, it was to Braccio that the task of reconciliation was entrusted. The news of Sforza's death came as such a shock to Braccio that it was some time before he would believe it. Genuine grief mingled with a presentiment that he would not long survive the rival, whose fortunes were so strangely linked with his own. These forebodings were fulfilled five months later when Braccio met his end over that same siege of Aquila which had cost Sforza his life.

In 1398 Sforza was able to form a small company of his own, and to launch upon an independent career as a mercenary captain. At that time Gian Galeazzo Visconti was rapidly making himself master of Northern and Central Italy. Perugia made a desperate attempt to escape the fate of her sister republics by taking Sforza into her service, and for two years the armies of Milan were kept at bay. When Perugia at length bowed beneath Visconti's yoke, the abilities of her defender had not escaped Gian Galeazzo's notice. Sforza entered the service of Milan with a doubled salary, and only the jealousy of the Milanese captains at the favour bestowed upon an intruder prevented him from sharing the final triumphs of Gian Galeazzo's reign. As it was, Sforza fled in danger of his life to Florence, which had become the final centre of resistance to Visconti's advance. While he was engaged in the defence of Florentine liberty Sforza made the acquaintance of Lucia Terzana, who became the mother of four of his sons. On 23rd July, 1401, the eldest of these was born at San Miniato. Hence Corio, the Milanese historian, must needs break off from his account of Gian Galeazzo's exploits to tell how, beneath the banners of the Republic that barred Visconti's path of conquest, the future Duke of Milan made his entry into the

world. "At that time," he writes, "the heavens and the earth rejoiced at the birth of Francesco Sforza, who made his posterity illustrious."

On the arrival of Rupert III., King of the Romans, in Italy, with the intention of humbling his Milanese vassal, Sforza headed the Florentine contingent that was sent to his aid. Rupert III. soon swelled the ranks of Sforza's admirers, and before they parted he granted him the right of bearing his own arms, namely, a lion rampant. The citizens of Cotignola had already given Sforza the quince (*cotigna*), which formed the device of his native town. Now, at the King's suggestion, the lion grasped the quince in his left paw, while with his right he challenged all those who should venture to wrest the trophy from his grasp. The device was crowned by the Sforza helmet, consisting of a winged dragon with a man's head. In 1409 a diamond ring was added by the Marquis of Este to commemorate Sforza's triumph over Ottobuono Terzo, the tyrant of Parma.

After the death of Gian Galeazzo Visconti, the chief scene of Italian warfare shifted from the centre to the south. In 1409 the Council of Pisa made an attempt to heal the Great Schism in the Papacy, with the only result that the number of rival popes was increased from two to three. The efforts of the various papal claimants to establish themselves in Rome alone furnished considerable employment for the *condottieri*. At the same time the prospect of the line of Anjou-Durazzo dying out with the present King Ladislas and his sister Joanna produced a fresh phase in the interminable Neapolitan Succession Wars. From the day that Sforza was first drawn into the Neapolitan conflict until the French invasions at the end of the fifteenth century, the affairs of Naples exercised a strong influence over the fortunes of his own House. Hence, it seems best to explain at the outset the essential features of the dynastic dualism which again and again broke the peace of the Neapolitan Kingdom. The chief rivals of the Durazzo monarchs were their French cousins of the second House of Anjou. In 1382 Charles of Durazzo had conquered Naples in defiance of the claims of Louis I. of Anjou, and from that time

the representatives of the French House missed no opportunity for seeking their revenge. When Joanna II. succeeded her brother in 1414, Louis III. of Anjou seemed the natural heir to the throne of Naples. In coming to Italy and announcing himself as King already, he outstepped his advantage, and Joanna promptly adopted Alfonso of Aragon as her heir, in order that he might act as a counterpoise to the pretensions of Anjou. Round these two claimants and their heirs raged all the Neapolitan wars of the century. The Pope and the Neapolitan baronage, who welcomed anything that weakened the power of the monarchy, fostered this dynastic struggle by every means in their power. It was no less acceptable to the *condottieri*, who realised their dearest ambitions in the perpetual state of warfare which it involved. Sforza had been in the service of Ladislas at the time of the King's death, and he remained for some years with Joanna II. When, however, Louis III. of Anjou entered the arena of Neapolitan politics, Sforza seized the opportunity to free himself from a most undesirable mistress. He and Pope Martin V. were responsible for the invitation that first brought Anjou to Italy, and on his arrival Sforza levied war upon the Queen, calling himself the Grand Constable of King Louis. Joanna replied by summoning Braccio and Alfonso of Aragon to her aid. From henceforth Sforza was generally identified with the cause of Anjou, while Braccio posed as the champion of Aragon. In the years that followed, the struggle between the rival schools of soldiery often obscured the dynastic conflict, which formed the ostensible reason for war. Meanwhile Joanna spent the remainder of her reign in supporting first one side and then the other as the occasion suited her.

While Sforza was fighting the battles of others he was gradually accumulating cities and territories of his own. Among his earliest acquisitions was his native Cotignola, of which he was made Papal Vicar by Pope John XXIII., whom he had helped to establish in Rome. In the service of Joanna II. Sforza experienced both extremes of fortune. At one moment he was loaded with gifts and favours, at the next he was disgraced and imprisoned. On one occasion he owed his

escape from prison, and probably his life, to the bravery of his sister Margherita. Implicated in a conspiracy with Joanna's cast-off favourite, Pandolfo d'Alopo, Sforza was thrown into prison, while some Neapolitan nobles went to take possession of his Castle of Tricarico. Margherita Attendolo had been left in charge of the castle, but instead of yielding it, she rode out at the head of such troops as she could muster, and took the envoys prisoners. She then kept them as hostages until Sforza was set at liberty. Yet with all her fickleness Joanna could not long dispense with Sforza's services, and each return to her favour added new territories to the *condottiere's* dominions. These lands were held under different conditions, but Sforza's rights usually included the administration of justice, and he often exercised all the privileges of an independent ruler. In the archives of Cotignola there are no less than four volumes of laws which Sforza framed for the municipality.¹ All the concerns of the little community are dealt with in their pages, which are distinguished throughout by a desire to respect local privileges and to protect the citizens from the arbitrary rule of subordinate officials. To these isolated towns in Romagna and Naples belongs the credit of having provided a famous race of rulers with their earliest training in the art of government.

In 1423 the two great *condottieri* leaders gathered forces for their final struggle. By this time Joanna had quarrelled with Alfonso of Aragon and was trying to drive him from Naples. When Braccio was hurrying to the aid of his patron he found his passage barred by the city of Aquila, and he thereupon sat down before the walls until the city could be reduced to submission. Not long before, Braccio had achieved his long-standing ambition of conquering Perugia, and he realised that Aquila would form a valuable connecting-link between that city and his possessions in the Campagna. Hence no appeals from Alfonso could induce him to abandon the siege. The result of this obstinacy was to give Sforza a free hand in Naples. In January, 1424, Alfonso had been obliged to fly and Sforza could muster his full strength for the relief of Aquila. Find-

¹ Solieri, *Origini*, etc.

ing Braccio's forces entrenched behind the river Pescara, Sforza at once prepared to ford the stream. While the Sforzeschi were in the act of crossing a violent storm arose, and their captain reached the shore to find that half his troops were still upon the opposite bank. He at once turned back to encourage them for another attempt. During this perilous passage Sforza's favourite page fell into the river, and in the effort to save him Sforza too lost his balance. Once the stream had engulfed him the strong current made rescue impossible. The gallant captain was never seen again, and his body was swept along by the stream until it reached the sea. For one who had spent his life in perpetual conflict it was a strangely appropriate tomb.

Contemporary historians describe the first Sforza as a man of great height and enormous strength, with a dark skin and deep-set blue eyes, half-hidden by his bushy, black eyebrows. His harsh voice and rough manners served to emphasise the general ferocity of his appearance. Iron discipline prevailed in his camp. All gambling and swearing were forbidden; a soldier who appeared in rusty armour was flogged; treachery and stealing were punished by death. Braccio once ventured to criticise his rival for the pains which he took to spare the country people from plunder, whereupon Sforza replied that he had never found cause to repent the observance of justice. In spite of his severity his soldiers were devoted to the leader, who shared all their hardships, and whose courage and talents were extolled throughout Italy. "Truly your captain is far above all others of our age, go and tell him so from me," Alfonso of Aragon is held to have said to one of Sforza's soldiers whom he had taken prisoner. Alfonso's opinion was shared by all who came in contact with this chief of *condottieri*, who, as a soldier, was not even surpassed by his more famous son. Yet, in the elder Sforza, a soldier's gifts were coupled with a soldier's limitations. His whole interest lay in the camp, and this, with his hot blood and his want of education, prevented him from ever becoming a statesman. Hence to the end of his life he fought the battles of others, and he died as he had lived, a simple mercenary captain.



GABRIELE DA COTIGNOLA, ARCHBISHOP OF MILAN
 MONUMENT IN S. MARIA INCORONATA, MILAN

Sforza left behind him a large number of children, of whom several lived to make their mark in the world, and no less than three founded dynasties. Francesco's brother, Alessandro, became Lord of Pesaro, while his half-brother, Bosio, married the heiress of Santa Fiora. The Sforza Counts of Santa Fiora survived all other branches of the family, and Bosio's descendants retained the sovereignty of this little Tuscan State until the middle of the seventeenth century. Two more sons, Leone and Giovanni, were soldiers of some repute, while Gabriele became Archbishop of Milan. Thus the future Duke of Milan was no isolated genius absorbing all the talents of his race, but the greatest among a remarkable band of brothers. Francesco's mother, Lucia Terzana, was for long Sforza's recognised mistress, and when motives of ambition prompted the *condottiere* to take a wife, he married Lucia to one of his captains, Marco Fogliano. Hence Francesco's childhood was spent in the Fogliano household at Ferrara, where he was educated with the children of Niccolò d'Este. When twelve years old he joined his father in Naples, and from henceforth his home was the camp. Although at the time of Sforza's death Francesco was not yet twenty-three, his experience of the world was already considerable. He had fought in many battles where his military talents were soon perceived. Through the territories which had been bestowed on him by his father's patrons, he had gained some knowledge of government. When only seventeen he had married a Calabrian heiress, Polissena Ruffa, who died two years after their marriage, leaving her estates to her husband. This gave Francesco a certain influence in the district, and on Sforza's alliance with Louis of Anjou, his son was sent to win the Calabrian nobles to the Angevin cause. Francesco was summoned from thence to aid in the relief of Aquila, where his father's death left him the acknowledged leader of the Sforzeschi. In the confusion which followed Sforza's tragic end the young captain showed the greatest self-control. He at once rallied the troops and conducted an orderly retreat towards Naples. Here the sad news was broken to the Queen, who, loud in her lamentations at the loss of her captain, decreed that all his descendants must bear the name which he had

rendered illustrious. From henceforth Sforza became the family surname, and Attendolo gradually dropped out of use.

Meanwhile Braccio never for a moment relaxed his hold upon Aquila, and when the spring came a new army was despatched to its relief. Although an older captain was given nominal control of the expedition, the real leader was Francesco Sforza, and with him lay the honour of the final victory on 2nd June. Throughout the day his black plumes were seen waving in the forefront of the battle, serving as a rallying-point for his followers. Braccio, despite his mortal wounds, could not refrain from expressing his admiration for the young general. Francesco had proved himself, said this generous antagonist, a true son of his father. His victory at Aquila at once placed Francesco upon the pinnacle of military glory. Pope Martin V., who had trembled lest the fall of the city should leave Rome at Braccio's mercy, hailed Sforza as his deliverer and pronounced him to be the "beloved son of the Pope and the Church". The numerous *condottieri* who had taken part in the battle could not but recognise the superiority of Francesco's talents. All Italy competed for his services. Among the various competitors was no less a person than Filippo Maria Visconti, Duke of Milan. During the struggle over Naples between Joanna and Alfonso of Aragon, the Milanese fleet under Guido Torello had been sent to the Queen's aid. Hence it was on the advice of this captain that the Duke offered Francesco the command of 1,500 horse and 300 foot in the armies of Milan. In 1425 the offer was accepted, and Francesco embarked upon the first phase of his career in the Duchy which he was one day to rule.

When Francesco Sforza entered his service, the Duke of Milan had every need of skilful captains. Since 1412, when his brother's death left Filippo Maria sole heir to the Visconti dominions, his time had been spent in persistent efforts to reconstruct the territory and power that had once been his father's. To a certain extent he had succeeded. The Duchy of Milan now stretched from the Sesia on the west to the Mincio on the east. The Swiss had been driven back from Domodossola and Bellinzona. By the recovery of Piacenza and Parma, Visconti

once more controlled the passage of the Po, and could press on into Romagna by the highway of the Via Æmilia. In one quarter Filippo Maria had been even more successful than Gian Galeazzo. Genoa had been induced to exchange her French Protectorate for that of the Duke of Milan, thus leaving Visconti and Florence to vie for the control of the west coast, with no buffer state between them. For all this, Filippo Maria's position was in no way equal to that of his father. When Gian Galeazzo seemed about to control Italy, the only effective resistance came from Florence. Now not only Florence but Venice was prepared to oppose the expansion of Filippo Maria's dominions. Since the beginning of the century Venice had become a mainland power, with a frontier that touched the Duchy of Milan at the Mincio. In 1425 she was persuaded by Florence to take the offensive against Visconti as the surest means of preventing encroachment upon her existing boundaries. The effect of this double pressure was at once to emphasise the internal weaknesses of the Duchy. During the period of confusion which followed Gian Galeazzo's death, the composite character of the Milanese State had been most fully revealed. It was held together by a personal tie, and when that bond was removed the whole structure fell to pieces. Far from regarding Milan as their capital, the subject towns looked upon her as a rival republic who chanced to be subject to the same lord as themselves. On the death of Gian Galeazzo there was hardly a city that did not set up a local tyrant or break away from the Duchy under the leadership of one of Visconti's captains. Milan and Pavia alone remained to the Duke's sons, and even they rejoiced at the revival of the old system by which the younger brother ruled independently at Pavia, thus severing the connection between the two cities. Filippo Maria had, indeed, reunited the various elements of which the Duchy was composed. Yet what had happened once might happen again, and the process was made easier by the internal factions which divided the cities of Lombardy. If one party in the town favoured Visconti, the other almost necessarily opposed him. While the Ghibelline was bound by tradition to the side of the Duke of Milan, the Guelph was prepared to play into the hands

of Venice or into those of any other rivals to his supremacy. Such were the difficulties of the Duke of Milan which Francesco Sforza saw, for the first time, when he fought Filippo Maria's battles against Venice, and which he was to realise with a deepening personal interest as the years went by.

Sforza served under Visconti's banners through three successive wars against Venice. During that time he experienced to the full the inevitable ups and downs of a *condottiere's* career. Filippo Maria was himself no soldier, and in the absence of a recognised chief the quarrels between his captains were apt to become acute. The older men, such as Pergola and Guido Torello, invariably opposed the schemes of the younger and more adventurous element as represented by Sforza and Niccolò Piccinino. At the same time Piccinino was the recognised leader of the Bracceschi, and their temporary alliance could not override the hereditary rivalry between himself and Sforza. The appointment of Carlo Malatesta as Captain-General of the Milanese forces did not greatly improve the situation. Although the other *condottieri* were willing to accept his authority, he proved himself, according to Corio's sarcastic phrase, "more fitted for peace than for war". With such a leader it is hardly surprising that the campaigns of 1426 and 1427 ended in the surrender of Brescia and Bergamo to Venice. Francesco Sforza also suffered from the suspicions of Filippo Maria, who rivalled Louis XI. of France in his readiness to think evil of those who served him. In 1428 Sforza was imprisoned in the Castle of Mortara, near Pavia, upon a charge of treachery. Only after two years, when Visconti wished to defend Lucca from the onslaughts of Florence without openly interfering in Tuscany, did he remember his disgraced captain. Sforza was thereupon released, and only nominally dismissed by the Duke, in order that he might serve him more effectually. At Lucca fortune smiled kindly upon Sforza. After he had contrived to raise the siege the citizens proposed to accept him as their lord, while Florence offered him a substantial bribe to leave Lucca to her fate. Francesco closed with the latter offer, and retired with his troops to Cotignola. Thither he was followed by envoys from both Florence and Milan, eager to secure his services for the

coming war. After prolonged negotiations the prize fell to Milan. Whereas Florence only offered a high salary, Filippo Maria promised Sforza the hand of his illegitimate daughter, Bianca Maria, with the prospect of succeeding him upon the throne of Milan. From henceforth the consummation of this alliance became the goal of Francesco's ambitions, the end towards which his whole policy was directed.

Sforza returned to the service of Milan in time to share in the third war against Venice, which was ended in 1432 by the coming of the Emperor Sigismund to Italy. When the Emperor came to Milan to receive the iron crown of Lombardy, the occasion was marked by the betrothal of Francesco Sforza to Bianca Maria Visconti. The eight-year-old bride lived with her mother, Agnese del Maino, at Abbiategrasso, and this was probably her first visit to Milan. When the ceremonies were over Bianca returned to her quiet home, where she must have watched with some excitement the vicissitudes through which Francesco won his way to her side. For the moment Sforza was in high favour with the Duke. At the time of his betrothal he was invested with three fiefs in the neighbourhood of Alessandria. A year later he embarked upon fresh exploits in which the hand of Visconti is plainly discernible. Officially, Francesco received leave of absence for a few months in order that he might recover his Neapolitan fiefs, which were slipping from his grasp. When he halted, on his way south, to wrest the greater part of the March of Ancona from Pope Eugenius IV., it is clear that he did so with the approval, if not at the instigation, of the Duke of Milan. During the recent war Eugenius had shown himself Venetian in sympathy as well as by birth, and Visconti welcomed an opportunity to do him covert injury. Hence Sforza's interference in the March seemed, at first, merely a repetition of the Lucca episode upon a larger scale. It proved, however, to be a turning-point in Francesco's career. From that time, although Sforza still served as a mercenary, he had also his own battles to fight and his own cities from whence to draw men and money. He had ceased to be merely a *condottiere*, and had entered the ranks of the Italian despots,

CHAPTER II

FRANCESCO SFORZA—LORD OF THE MARCH

(1433—1447)

THE March of Ancona, which formed the chief scene of Sforza's activities during the next fourteen years, is a narrow strip of country bounded on the north and south by Romagna and the Kingdom of Naples, on the west by the Apennines, and on the east by the sea. It has been said that Romagna was the centre of the nervous system of Italy, and the description is equally applicable to the March. As Romagna, the March of Ancona formed part of the estates of the Church, but the weakness of the papal power during the exile and schism had enabled local despots to establish themselves in the chief towns of both districts. Unable to overthrow these usurpers, the Pope had in many cases saved his dignity by making them Papal Vicars of the towns which they had mastered. The arrangement found favour with the Italian powers, who asked nothing better than to see the March weak and divided. For the March, no less than Romagna, was essentially a border province—a highway between north and south. Hence its destinies were closely watched by each of the five States, and the undue preponderance of any one Power in that quarter at once aroused the suspicions of the other four. When Francesco Sforza first entered the March, the whole territory was given over to misrule. The petty despots were too weak to be anything but the worst and most tyrannical of sovereigns. They held their own towns by violence, while they sought to obtain those of their neighbours by treachery. Perpetual feuds, bad government and oppression wrought havoc throughout their dominions. The towns which were

not subject to a native lord enjoyed nominal liberty under the protection of the Church, yet their fate was hardly happier than that of their neighbours. Giovanni Vitelleschi, who held supreme authority in the March as Papal Legate, had contrived to inspire universal hatred, and in the absence of a despot the citizens were more exposed to his cruelty. Hence Sforza was welcomed on all sides as, in later years, Cæsar Borgia was welcomed in Romagna. Where the inhabitants did not take the opportunity to throw off the yoke of a local tyrant, the ruling families sought Sforza's aid in order to rid themselves of Vitelleschi. Such being the conditions of the March, it is not surprising that the years which Francesco spent there proved the most troubled in his career. If for the moment the Italian Powers regarded him as a convenient instrument to use against one another, they soon began to fear the rise of a military monarchy under the greatest soldier of the day. When they turned against Sforza they could reckon upon considerable support from his subjects, of whom many were soon as eager to overthrow Francesco's authority as they had once been to establish it. Nevertheless, his rule in the March gave Sforza experience which he could hardly have obtained elsewhere. Here, for the first time, he met the princes of Italy upon terms of equality. Here he formed friendships and alliances which stood him in good stead in the years to come. Here, above all, he was so far independent as to be able to make his own terms with Visconti and to force him to keep his promises.

With the acquisition of Jesi on 7th December, 1433, Francesco obtained his first footing in the March. From thence he issued a manifesto,¹ in which he announced himself as the representative of the Council of Basel, sent in order to free the March of Ancona from the iniquitous rule of Eugenius IV. Every city was called upon to dismiss its papal officials without delay, and to send a deputation of four citizens to Sforza's camp to discuss the future government of the province. A timely warning was added to the effect that those who con-

¹ Benadduci, G., *Della Signoria di Francesco Sforza nella Marca*, p. 14. Tolentino, 1892.

tinued to pay taxes to the Pope would have to pay them twice over, while those who obeyed the manifesto would at once enjoy Sforza's favour and protection. The effect of this proclamation was instantaneous, and on 10th December Sforza began what was rather a triumphal progress than a conquest. On his march from Jesi ambassadors from the chief cities came to offer him their keys. The few places that dared to resist were plundered. Montolmo, Macerata, Fermo, Recanati, Osimo, one after the other, acknowledged Sforza as their lord. On Christmas Day his triumph was made complete by the submission of Ascoli, which brought the conqueror to the southern frontiers of the province. Vitelleschi, after a vain attempt at resistance, betook himself to Loreto, saying that he wished to prepare the famous sanctuary for Francesco's coming. The real object of his visit transpired a few days later, when the Papal Legate set sail for Venice taking with him no less than sixteen chests filled with the treasures that he had robbed from the sanctuary. From thence he made his way to Rome, leaving Francesco in undisputed possession of the March.

Fortunately for Sforza, Eugenius IV. was not in a position to oust him from his newly won dominions. The armies of Milan were already threatening Rome, and a few months later the Pope was forced to take refuge in Florence. Hence in February, 1434, Sforza was made Marquis of the March and Vicar of Fermo, while he was given command of the papal armies, with the title of Gonfalonier of the Church. Francesco hastened to publish the treaty throughout his dominions. Thereupon, says the chronicle of Fermo, "the hills of the March were seen to shine with fires of joy, its cities and fortresses were illuminated".¹ In September Eugenius revived the League of Florence, Venice and the Papacy against Milan, and offered the post of Captain-General to Sforza. It was with some hesitation that Francesco committed himself definitely to the cause of Visconti's enemies. Yet he had already offended the Duke of Milan by his treaty with Eugenius, and to quarrel with the Pope at this juncture was to imperil his

¹ Cf. Benadduci, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

position in the March. Hence Francesco became Captain-General of the League, and threw himself into the struggle against his former colleagues, Piccinino and Fortebraccio. Meanwhile the remaining cities of the March were gradually recognising Sforza's authority. The inhabitants of Camerino rose and murdered all of the ruling family of Varano upon whom they could lay hands, while in May, 1435, a wholesale massacre of the Chiavelli took place in the church at Fabriano. Such conspiracies were generally accompanied by a voluntary surrender of the town to Sforza, in order that he might protect the rebels from the vengeance of those relatives of the native lord who still remained alive. Strong in the possession of a legal title, and of considerable local support, Sforza appeared to have conquered the March with almost incredible ease. Now, according to Machiavelli's principle, he was to meet with one difficulty after another in keeping what he had won.

In the autumn of 1435 Francesco went to visit his new patron at Florence. Here he was received with every mark of honour both by the Pope and by Cosimo dei Medici, whom Francesco probably now met for the first time. While the troops performed feats of arms to the delight of the citizens, the seeds of a lasting friendship were sown between the *condottiere* leader and the virtual ruler of Florence. Francesco, with that curious power of attraction which he appears to have possessed, at once convinced the shrewd Florentine that his was no ordinary personality. From henceforth Cosimo was prepared to stake his reputation upon Francesco's ultimate success. In the most critical moments of Sforza's career, Cosimo was ready with advice and encouragement and often with pecuniary aid. But for his friend's persistent support it is doubtful whether even Sforza could have won his way to Milan.

If Francesco could from that time reckon Cosimo dei Medici as a friend, he soon discovered a secret enemy in the person of Eugenius IV. In September, 1436, Francesco narrowly escaped assassination from the hands of Baldassare da Offida, Podestà of Bologna. He was, however, warned in time to avoid the danger, and to seize the would-be murderer. Offida was imprisoned in the fortress at Fermo, where he was

killed by a brick which fell, perhaps not wholly accidentally, upon his head. Before his death he wrote to Francesco confessing that he had acted as the instrument of Eugenius IV., and warning him of the Pope's designs. "My Lord," wrote Offida, "there is no man in the world towards whom the Pope bears more ill-will than he does to you. For God's sake, do not trust him, for he will always do you evil when he can."¹ This testimony was confirmed in the following year, when Piccinino's son, Francesco, appeared in the March with an army at his back, announcing that he had come to restore the rule of the Papacy, and to drive out the usurper. In a proclamation² inciting Sforza's subjects to rebellion, Piccinino informed them that he was supported by both the Pope and the Duke of Milan, who had "lately become a good and devout son of the Church," and that his father Niccolò Piccinino would shortly come to his aid. On Sforza's protest, Eugenius did indeed issue a counter-proclamation repudiating Francesco Piccinino's action, and expressing his entire confidence in his "beloved son Francesco Sforza".³ Yet this did not bring with it the restoration of the towns that Piccinino had already conquered. It was clear that the Pope desired nothing better than to see Sforza undone, and that he would seize any opportunity to rid himself of his too powerful vassal.

While Francesco was struggling to maintain his hold upon the March, he kept an ever watchful eye upon the proceedings of Visconti. In 1437 the elder Piccinino waged war upon the League in Tuscany, and the Venetians proposed to create a diversion by sending Sforza against Cremona. Their scheme was frustrated by Francesco's firm refusal to cross the Po. He was willing to fight the Milanese forces in other parts of Italy, but he would not invade the territories of his prospective father-in-law. The Venetians were naturally angry at such unwonted independence on the part of a *condottiere* whom they were helping to pay, and even Cosimo dei Medici could not prevent a rupture between them and Sforza. Neverthe-

¹ *Le insidie di Papa Eugenio IV. contro Francesco Sforza accertate da un documento sincrono.* Arch. Stor. Lombardo, 1885, p. 750.

² Benadduci, p. 97. ³ *Op. cit.*, p. 99.

less, Francesco's action stood him in good stead by paving the way for his reconciliation with the Duke of Milan. Visconti was delighted at the discomfiture of Venice, and in March, 1438, he made peace with Florence and Sforza, by a treaty from which the Venetians were excluded. More than this, the Duke agreed that Bianca Maria's marriage with Francesco should take place without delay. Francesco Piccinino was recalled from the March, at a moment when he seemed likely to conquer the whole province, while Visconti also promised Sforza his support for the expedition which he proposed to make in aid of the Angevin cause in Naples. On 4th April Francesco wrote in high glee to his brothers, Alessandro and Giovanni, saying that all his business with the Duke of Milan had been most satisfactorily settled, and that he hoped in a very short time to bring his bride home to the March.¹ According to Francesco's expectations the wedding would be in May, and he intended to come at once to his own dominions, where Bianca would be safe from her father's clutches. For the next few weeks the whole province gave itself up to preparations for the reception of the bridal pair. The centre of interest lay round the little city of Fermo, the capital of Sforza's dominions, and Bianca's future home. Fermo stood on a hill some five miles from the modern east coast railway, as it runs southward from Ancona. On the crest of the hill rose the newly erected Girifalco or fortress, which was now to be improved and adorned for the reception of the bride. Yet Fermo alone was not capable of furnishing all that was required for the coming festivities. Special officials were appointed to visit the other towns of the March in quest of "everything necessary for the said *festa*". Most varied was the list of Sforza's requirements. The officials were to make careful inquiries as to the amount of corn, straw, meat and poultry that each town could provide. They were to ascertain the number of "good beds with all the necessary appurtenances". They were to discover what places could furnish cooks and "boys capable of and suitably dressed for waiting, or for other more important duties". Horses, beasts of burden,

¹ Benadduci, p. 115.

carpenters "with their tools," game, eggs, fresh cheese and salted tongue—all were to be sought out and ordered for the great occasion.¹ Meanwhile the inhabitants of every town that recognised Sforza's authority were voting money for a gift to the bride and choosing representatives to attend the festivities at Fermo.

The expectations that he had raised in the March must have added greatly to the bitterness of Francesco's disappointment when he discovered that he had been outwitted by the crafty policy of the Duke of Milan. Filippo Maria had no intention of allowing the marriage to take place until he was absolutely forced to do so. Once Bianca was married, he would lose the bait with which Sforza could always be lured to his side. Hence the wedding was suddenly postponed at the Duke's orders, and Francesco's chances of winning his bride seemed as remote as ever. Visconti's promises of support in Naples proved as valueless as those which concerned his daughter. The present representative of the Angevin cause was René, the younger brother of Louis III., who since Joanna II.'s death in 1435 had been trying to drive Alfonso of Aragon from the Neapolitan Kingdom. He had at first been aided by Filippo Maria, and, at Gaeta, the Genoese fleet had actually taken Alfonso prisoner, carrying him off as a captive to Milan. Here Alfonso succeeded in persuading Visconti that, in view of the French claims upon Milan, his interests were best served by opposing the French House of Anjou in Naples. The argument appealed to Visconti, as it was one day to appeal to Sforza, and from that moment he secretly supported the cause of Aragon. He encouraged Sforza to embark upon a Neapolitan expedition, but by once more letting Piccinino loose upon the March, he prevented Francesco from striking a single blow in René's support. Shortly afterwards the renewal of the Milanese attacks on Tuscany forced the Florentines to recall their *condottiere*. Francesco obeyed the summons, having learned to his cost the worth of Visconti's pledges.

For three years more the old struggle was renewed, years

¹ Benadduci, Docs. Nos. xxvii., xxviii.

of hard fighting for Francesco Sforza, and of poverty and unrest for his over-burdened dominions. Abandoning his scruples as to the invasion of Visconti's territories, Sforza threw himself into the war with Milan as Captain-General of the Venetian forces. The prolonged campaign round Lake Garda during the winter of 1439-40 is famous in *condottiere* annals, and it added no less to Sforza's reputation than to that of his antagonist, Niccolò Piccinino. Meanwhile Alessandro Sforza, who acted as Lieutenant of the March during his brother's absence, lived in hourly fear of a sudden diversion in that quarter on the part of the Milanese. Fortifications were repaired and the closest watch was maintained throughout the province. Added to this, the expenses of Francesco's campaigns fell largely on his own dominions. What with the constant demands for men and money, the public celebrations of Francesco's victories, and the provision of winter quarters for the greater part of his forces, there seemed no respite for the distracted March. At last, in July, 1441, some relief came. The course of the war in Lombardy had tended of late in favour of Milan, but the Duke realised that successes in the field placed him more entirely in the hands of his captains. Piccinino complained that the years which he had spent in Visconti's service had not earned him sufficient land for his grave, and he would now be content with nothing short of Piacenza. Luigi San Severino demanded Novara. Dal Verme had his eye upon Tortona. There seemed, indeed, no captain whose hopes were not fixed upon some town or castle in the Milanese. Mindful of the fate of Milan upon the death of his father, Filippo Maria feared that these men would use his declining years to partition his dominions among themselves. In his hour of need he turned once more to Francesco Sforza and begged him to act as arbiter between Milan and Venice. Thereupon Sforza made the draft of a treaty, which included among its terms the celebration of his marriage with Bianca. This time the slippery Visconti had no opportunity of eluding his bargain. Peace was signed at Capriana, and the ambassadors, delighted with Francesco's tact and moderation, made it their first business to ensure him his bride. On 26th October the long postponed

wedding took place. It had eventually been decided that Cremona and Pontremoli should form Bianca's dowry. If Filippo were forced to yield territory to Sforza, he would at least choose the towns that he found most difficult to hold. Cremona, with its great fortress on the Po, lay in the debatable land between Venice and Milan, and its acquisition had long been the dearest ambition of the Venetians. Pontremoli was also a border town, guarding an important Apennine pass, at the point where Milanese territory touched that of Florence. Hence the possession of these places would force Sforza to act as Visconti's watchdog against the two powers which threatened to encroach upon the Duchy of Milan. In consequence of this arrangement Cremona was selected as the scene of the wedding festivities. The bride and bridegroom met at the Church of S. Sigismondo, outside the town, and from thence they made a triumphal entry into Cremona as husband and wife. Among the crowds gathered in the city to welcome them were some of the principal inhabitants of the March of Ancona, who had been invited to Cremona at Francesco's express orders. Doubtless the gay doings in which they now shared were sufficient to compensate them for all former disappointments. When Francesco became Duke of Milan he replaced the church in which he had been married by a new and more imposing building. Here, just a century later (1540), the Cremonese painter, Giulio Campi, finished his altar-piece in which Francesco and Bianca appear in the act of being presented to the Virgin by S. Sigismondo. Thus, at a time when not only Francesco and Bianca but their descendants had ceased to reign in Milan, the memory of their wedding day lived on in the traditions of Cremona.

At the date of her wedding Bianca Maria Visconti was only seventeen, while Sforza was a hardened soldier of forty, who had seen several years of fighting before his wife's birth. Although a biographer declares that Bianca, "being a lady of great judgment, would have no other husband than Count Francesco because of his valour,"¹ the two, in all probability,

¹ Sabadino, G., *Gynevra de le clare donne*. (*Scelta di curiosità letterarie inedite o rare*. Dispensa 223.) Bologna, 1888,

did not meet between their betrothal in 1432 and the wedding. The alliance had been throughout a matter of politics, yet contrary to all appearances, it proved entirely happy. Bianca was a well-educated, tactful and good woman. In the words of Sabadino's panegyric: "Her pure nature no less than her fair complexion accorded well with her name". She threw herself heart and soul into her husband's interests, and on more than one occasion he profited by her advice. Her great liberality and her kindly manners added to the popularity which she naturally possessed in Milan as the last of the Visconti. Hence, in spite of Francesco's occasional infidelities, Sabadino can speak without exaggeration of the "inexhaustible matrimonial love" which existed between Bianca and her husband. Francesco, for his part, had good cause to thank God "for having honoured him with a wife who had not her equal in the world".

The years which followed Francesco's marriage were marked by a determined onslaught upon the March of Ancona from the combined forces of Milan, Naples and the Papacy. Filippo Maria Visconti seldom showed favour to any one without repenting of his action, and the fact that he had wedded his daughter to Francesco Sforza was enough to produce this fresh outburst of hostility. Moreover, Sforza's position in the March was far too independent to suit his father-in-law's purposes. Hence Visconti made common cause with Alfonso of Aragon, who had been steadily gaining ground against René, and who would now do anything in his power to keep Sforza out of the Kingdom until Naples itself had fallen. At the same time Eugenius IV. threw off the mask and exchanged his secret plottings against Francesco for open hostility. In his desire to recover the March he even renounced his traditional Angevin sympathies and consented to invest Alfonso's son with the Neapolitan Kingdom in return for aid against Sforza. Confronted by this formidable alliance Francesco was forced to devote himself entirely to the defence of his own territories. For the next six years he rarely left the March. With Bianca at his side Francesco's interests were concentrated upon his little State in a way that they had not been before. Thus it is

only natural that this phase in Sforza's career should be distinguished by his relations with the neighbouring despots of Central Italy, with whom he was, for the time being, identified. As Lord of the March Francesco came in contact with two remarkable personalities who stand out prominently among the Italian princes of the century. Sigismondo Malatesta, the brilliant and unscrupulous Lord of Rimini, was first Sforza's ally and afterwards his bitter enemy. Federico da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, whom Francesco first knew as an opponent, became his most loyal supporter and his life-long friend. Both Sigismondo and Federico combined the functions of an independent ruler with those of a *condottiere*. Both were distinguished by a passion for every form of art which bore fruit in those two marvels of the Renaissance, the Malatesta temple at Rimini and the Ducal Palace at Urbino. Yet here the resemblance between them ended. In the variety and brilliancy of his gifts Sigismondo outshone not only Federico but Sforza. Nevertheless, his rashness, his inconsistencies and his utter want of faith accorded ill with Francesco's patience and caution. Perpetual friction marked the period of their alliance and they parted in mutual hatred and contempt. Federico, on the other hand, was a man after Francesco's own heart. With his intellectual and artistic tastes went the practical ability and sound common-sense that made for success both as a soldier and as a ruler. If Federico, the *condottiere*, drew his inspiration from Sforza, Federico, the despot, had no small share in the development of the future Duke of Milan. When on his death-bed Francesco looked for some one who would aid Bianca and her children to maintain their hold on Milan, it was to Federico of Urbino that he turned, begging him to show the same staunch loyalty towards the young Duke of Milan that he had shown towards his father in the days of poverty and adversity in the March of Ancona.

The alliance between Francesco and Malatesta dates from Sigismondo's marriage with Francesco's daughter Polissena, which took place only a few weeks before the wedding at Cremona. On their way to Fermo, in the spring of 1442, Francesco and Bianca visited Sigismondo and his wife at their

Castle of Gradara. Here Sforza's honeymoon was brought to an abrupt end by the news of Piccinino's appearance in the March as Captain-General of the League between Milan, Naples and the Papacy. For the next two years Francesco and his son-in-law carried on an uphill struggle against the armies of the League. Sforza's numerical inferiority prevented him from risking a battle in the open field. He therefore divided his troops among some dozen cities, placing each fortress in charge of one of his captains. By this means he hoped to form a nucleus for the recovery of the entire province, when the opportunity arose. The weakness of this plan lay in the reliance which it placed upon the loyalty of Sforza's captains. Many of these played their leader false, and, in some cases where the troops were loyal, the citizens rose against them and handed over their town to the enemy. Meanwhile Francesco and Bianca took refuge with Sigismondo Malatesta at Fano. When Alfonso of Aragon himself laid siege to the town Sigismondo's loyalty was strained to breaking-point, and only lavish bribes, rendered effective by the presence of Sforza's troops, prevented him from turning traitor. Luckily for Francesco, the Duke of Milan did not wish to see him entirely crushed, and when the situation seemed most desperate he persuaded Alfonso to withdraw from the March. This and the arrival of reinforcements from Florence and Venice enabled Sforza to take the offensive. His military talents speedily made themselves felt, and before the end of 1443 he had done much to recover his lost ground.

Throughout the year 1444 Sforza's star was in the ascendant. In January Bianca gave birth to a son in the Girifalco at Fermo, and the Duke of Milan sent word that he wished the boy to be called Galeazzo Maria. This tacit recognition of his son as Visconti's heir filled Sforza with hope, and in the tournament which followed the christening the Visconti viper was quartered for the first time with the Sforza lion. Later in the year the elder Piccinino was recalled to Milan to confer with the Duke. During his absence Francesco won a great victory over his son at Montolmo, which at length forced Eugenius IV. to come to terms. In October peace was made by which

Sforza was confirmed in his title of Marquis and in all his former possessions save Osimo, Recanati and Fabriano. Two days before this treaty Niccolò Piccinino died in Milan, thus freeing Sforza from his most formidable opponent and at the same time paving the way for his alliance with Federico da Montefeltro. Personal friendship for Piccinino had hitherto kept Federico in the opposite camp, but he now threw himself unreservedly into Sforza's cause. The immediate result of this alliance was the acquisition of Pesaro, a possession which remained to the House of Sforza long after the March of Ancona had been lost. Pesaro belonged to Galeazzo Malatesta, from whose feeble grasp his cousin Sigismondo had long been trying to wrest it. Now Federico, who acted as Galeazzo's champion and adviser, proposed that he should sell the city to Alessandro Sforza on condition that he should marry Malatesta's granddaughter, Costanza Varano. According to the humanist Filelfo, who, as a native of Tolentino, was well versed in the affairs of the March, the scheme originated through Federico's discovery of a romantic attachment between Alessandro and Costanza. This accomplished young lady and her brother Rodolfo had alone survived the massacre of the Varani at Camerino in 1435. Since then she had lived with her grandfather in Pesaro, and Alessandro probably first met her at Gradara, when, as a girl of fourteen, she recited an oration to welcome the arrival of Francesco Sforza and his bride. For two years Alessandro nourished what he felt to be a hopeless passion, until Federico of Urbino, having discovered his secret, asked him what he would give if he could make Costanza his bride. "I would give her my life," replied Alessandro promptly. Thereupon the kind-hearted Duke promised to do everything in his power to favour Sforza's suit.¹ With his help the transaction was speedily made. Francesco Sforza furnished the necessary funds, and in December, 1444, the wedding took place. Soon afterwards Alessandro and Costanza entered Pesaro to enjoy a period of married life that proved all too brief for their devotion.

¹ Filelfo, F., *Vita di Federico di Urbino*. MS. inedito. Benadduci. Doc. No. lxxxv.

His brother's acquisition of Pesaro proved the turning-point of Francesco's career in the March. It seemed for the moment that his difficulties were overcome, and that he would now be able to rule his dominions in peace. Instead of this, the Pesaro episode provoked a storm in the March before which Francesco was at length forced to succumb. Sigismondo Malatesta's alliance with Sforza had been prompted by the sole desire to obtain Pesaro for himself. Now that he saw the prize snatched from his grasp, and Sforza hand-in-glove with his bitterest foe, Federico da Montefeltro, Sigismondo's fury knew no bounds. Eager for vengeance, Sigismondo turned to Sforza's enemies outside the March. In the spring of 1445 the allied forces of Milan, Naples and the Papacy opened a fresh attack upon Francesco's dominions, with Sigismondo Malatesta at the head of the papal troops. Aided by Federico of Urbino, Sforza made a gallant attempt at resistance. Yet Sigismondo's knowledge of the country and local influence achieved what numerical strength alone could not do. One by one Francesco's towns fell away until, in October, Sigismondo won his final triumph with the conquest of Roccacontrada. The fortress was held to be impregnable, and its loss deprived Sforza of his only free communication with Urbino and Tuscany. Hence Sigismondo returned in delight to Rimini, where he ordered Pisanello to cast his well-known medal in honour of the victory. One side of the medal shows Sigismondo on horseback, pointing to the Malatesta device which figures on the fortress of Roccacontrada in the background. He had every reason to be proud of his achievement. When the rebellion of Fermo in November left Jesi alone in Sforza hands, it was clear that his defeat beneath the walls of Roccacontrada had dealt the final blow to Francesco's power in the March.

While the March of Ancona was slipping from Francesco's grasp, events in Lombardy were drawing him steadily towards Milan. Filippo Maria made Sforza's troubles in his own dominions the occasion for an attack upon Bianca's dowry towns of Pontremoli and Cremona. Whereupon Venice, who kept an ever-watchful eye upon Cremona, declared war in de-

fence of the city. When the Venetian forces, under Micheletto Attendolo, after defeating the Milanese at Casalmaggiore, crossed the Adda and ravaged the country up to the walls of Milan, Visconti realised his mistake. He sent piteous appeals to Francesco Sforza begging him to overlook the past and to come to the aid of his old and blind father-in-law. Sforza should be made Captain-General of the Milanese forces, with a large salary and with general powers of government throughout the Duchy. Francesco's anxiety to accept this offer paved the way for a settlement with regard to the March. Bianca's eagerness to reconcile her husband with her father; Alfonso's desire to help his Milanese ally; the death of Francesco's implacable foe, Eugenius IV., all tended in the same direction. At length, on 4th August, 1447, Francesco surrendered Jesi to the Papacy for the sum of 35,000 florins. Sad at heart Francesco went to Pesaro to make his final preparations for leaving the province which was no longer his. Here he found Alessandro plunged in grief at the loss of his beloved Costanza, who had died a month earlier in giving birth to a son. From Pesaro Francesco and Bianca set out for Lombardy, halting on their way at Cotignola, which was now Francesco's sole possession in Central Italy. Here news reached them which made the loss of the March of Ancona appear but a small matter. "The said Lord Filippo Maria is held to be dying," wrote one of Sforza's friends in Milan, "and I fear that before you receive this letter . . . he will have passed from this life. Therefore, if you receive orders to pause on your journey, do not appear to understand them, but pursue your way."¹ Others wrote telling the same tale, and entreating Francesco to come in person to Milan. Once he had arrived, they insisted, half the game would he won. On 15th August Filippo Maria Visconti breathed his last, and the throne of Milan lay within Sforza's reach.

The few momentous days in August, 1447, were probably the last that any Sforza ruler spent in Cotignola. Nevertheless, this cradle of their race was not forgotten by Francesco and

¹ Osio, L., *Documenti diplomatici tratti dagli archivi Milanesi*, vol. iii., p. 584. Milan, 1864.

his descendants. Frequent letters passed between Cotignola and the Dukes of Milan, enabling the citizens to share in the events of the Milanese Court and dealing with the various crises that disturbed the little community.¹ Ambassadors from Cotignola were allowed to travel free of toll to Milan, where they were welcomed with all the honour due to "a city that has ever been faithful and most dear to the House of Sforza". The inhabitants repaid these marks of favour by a devotion which stood the test of adversity. On the collapse of Sforza rule in Milan in 1499, a Venetian force was sent to take possession of Cotignola. Great was the surprise of the Venetian captain when his demand for a peaceful surrender was met with the bold reply: "The people of Cotignola love the Sforza, as the people of Saguntum loved the Romans". Forgetting their internal enmities, the citizens rose as one man and drove the enemy from their gates. Once more, in 1513, Cotignola threw off the papal yoke and proclaimed Massimiliano Sforza as her Count. Only after the rebellion had been crushed with a heavy hand did the citizens acquiesce in the hard fate that severed them from their native rulers.

Francesco Sforza's rule in the March suggests two questions. What, in the first place, was the nature of his authority? Secondly, what were the causes of his failure? With regard to the first question, Sforza's authority differed little from that of every other Italian despot of the period. When a town fell beneath his yoke, the *tyrannis* was simply imposed upon the municipal constitution without any attempt to overthrow or supersede it. The normal municipal constitution comprised a General Council or *Credenza*, only summoned on rare occasions, and a magistracy of five, composed of a Consul and four Priors, one from each quarter of the city, upon whom fell the real work of administration. On the surrender of a town to Sforza his commissaries treated with this magistracy as to the terms of the capitulations, which were drawn up on the principle of protection in return for tribute. The functions of the despot were carefully defined from those of the municipality. Each city retained the control of its revenues, paying the appointed

¹ Cf. Solieri, G., *Le Origini*, etc.

tribute in quarterly instalments to Sforza's Treasurer-General. Although the capitulations usually contained the proviso that the dues of the despot should be fixed, this boon was easier to secure on paper than in practice. Sforza's constant need of money often forced him to demand the tribute in advance and also to make special calls upon the pockets of his subjects. The town might grumble and petition against these unexpected burdens, but if the money were not forthcoming, a Treasury official installed himself at the best inn and remained there at the expense of the Commune until the required sum was paid. Another stipulation of the municipality was that the fortifications should be kept up by the despot. Yet when a fortress was built as a punishment for rebellion its cost fell upon the inhabitants, and materials for the Girifalco at Fermo were collected throughout the March with promises of payment which were too often not fulfilled. The towns of the March had for the most part adopted the practice of placing the administration of justice in the hands of a foreign Podestà. With the appearance of a despot the Podestà came to be regarded as the connecting-link between the city and its lord, and the right of appointing him, which belonged nominally to the municipality, fell practically into Sforza's hands. The normal plan was for Sforza to appoint the Podestà from three men chosen by the town, yet he did not scruple to reject all three candidates if it suited his purpose. Although Sforza used the office of Podestà as a reward for his friends in cases of dishonesty he showed no favouritism. The Podestà who failed to pass the scrutiny to which he was subjected at the end of his annual term of office met with prompt dismissal. Matters of foreign policy, of peace and war, and of commerce lay outside the province of the municipal officials and were wholly in Sforza's hands. According to the custom of the age, trade was subordinated to politics and rebel cities were cut off from all commercial intercourse with their loyal neighbours. Commercial regulations were framed in the interest of the consumer. Severe penalties attended the export of grain, and as provisions grew scarce every effort was made to keep down prices. Considering Sforza's double rôle of despot and *condot-*

tiere, the personal character of his rule in the March is certainly remarkable. The archives of one town alone contain some thirty letters from Francesco.¹ In some he tells of his successes in Lombardy, in others he asks for supplies. Some deal with a petty quarrel between the town and its neighbour, some with the recommendation or dismissal of a Podestà. Looked upon as a whole, Sforza's rule, although no less despotic was less barbarous and less capricious than that of the local tyrants whom he supplanted. Its worst feature was the constant drain which it made upon the resources of the March. Yet the rule of the Papacy was quite as burdensome, and Sforza, whose lack of funds once forced him to pawn his very clothes to a Jew at Ancona, at least shared the poverty of his subjects.

Why, then, did Sforza fail? Some more definite answer than the assertion that circumstances were against him may at least be suggested. The Italian despot derived his authority from three main sources. Nominally, he ruled by right of a legal title bestowed on him by Pope or Emperor. Practically his power depended upon a judicious mixture of force and popular consent. In Sforza's case no one of these elements was altogether lacking, yet all three contained a flaw which in the end proved fatal. The legal title alone was always the least effective, and it only became valuable as the seal and crown of the other two. Sforza's title was rendered peculiarly impotent by the fact that it was derived from no far-off Emperor, but from a Pope who had granted it as a momentary expedient, and who took the first opportunity to repudiate his treaty. The armed forces under Sforza's control might well be considered sufficient to hold the March against all enemies. Yet these belonged to Sforza the *condottiere*, not to Sforza the despot. They were paid for by supplies from Florence and Venice, and must needs be used in their interests. When Sforza was fighting in Lombardy and Tuscany, he could not leave an adequate force to defend his own dominions. Moreover, the large area over which Sforza's operations extended made him

¹ Cf. Valeri, D. G., *Della Signoria di Francesco Sforza nella Marca secondo i documenti di Serrasanquirico*, Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1884.

dependent upon the good faith of his captains, which proved too often a broken reed. With regard to the third element of popular consent, Sforza stood at enormous disadvantage as compared with the native lords. He had, indeed, been welcomed by the inhabitants of the March, yet it has been proved times without number in Italian history that popular consent in order to be permanent must rest upon an hereditary basis. Camerino invited Sforza's protection after the massacre of the Varani, but in a year's time it rebelled against him, and the city knew no peace until Rodolfo Varano was recalled to the *Signoria* in 1444. In the same way the vagaries of Tolentino were due to the local family of Mauruzi, who, as soldiers of fortune, passed from one camp to another, and almost invariably carried with them the sympathies of their native town. The contrast between the loyalty of Cotignola and the fickleness of Francesco's dominions in the March is the measure of the value of popular consent unfortified by hereditary ties. It is not without significance that the town which showed most affection for Sforza was that which remained longest under his rule. Jesi, where the citizens petitioned vainly against the sale of their town to the Papacy in 1447, had been the first place in the March to acknowledge Sforza, and it had also served as his headquarters during subsequent campaigns. This goes far towards proving that if Sforza could have lived for some time in the March, he might have won the personal affection that was not his by hereditary right. Yet residence in the province was made impossible, both by Sforza's profession as a *condottiere* and by the fact that his true interest centred in Lombardy. His rule in the March of Ancona could only be an episode, a study in the art of despotism whereby Sforza gained experience, to be used on a larger scale and under more favourable conditions.



PLAN OF MILAN. (ADAPTED FROM VERRI'S STORIA DI MILANO)

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--|------------------|
| A. 14TH CENTURY WALLS (BUILT BY AZZO VISCONTI) | | B. 16TH CENTURY WALLS (PRESENT BOUNDARY) | |
| 1. CASTELLO SFORZESCO | 5. S. AMBROGIO | 9. PORTA COMASINA | 13. PORTA ROMANA |
| 2. DUOMO | 6. S. EUSTORGIO | 10. " NUOVA | 14. " LODOVICA |
| 3. CORTE D'ARENGO | 7. S. MARIA DELLE GRAZIE | 11. " ORIENTALE | 15. " TICINESE |
| 4. OSPEDALE MAGGIORE | 8. S. STEFANO | 12. " TOSA | 16. " VERCELLINA |

CHAPTER III

FRANCESCO SFORZA AND THE AMBROSIAN REPUBLIC

(1447—1450)

DURING the last few weeks of Francesco Sforza's career in the March of Ancona, Milan, upon which his eyes were now fixed, formed a veritable hot-bed of political intrigue and party rivalry. Filippo Maria Visconti, characteristic to the last, preferred to sacrifice the Duchy to the evils of a disputed succession rather than to commit himself to any one party before his death. Hence the numerous claimants to Milan gathered like vultures round the dying prince, in the hope that if they could not carry off the prize in its entirety they might at least contrive to divide the spoils. From the point of view of hereditary right, Charles, Duke of Orleans, had a strong claim upon Milan through his mother, Valentina Visconti, a claim, moreover, which Filippo Maria had brought into prominence by appealing to the French king for aid against Venice. Valentina's dowry town of Asti had remained in the hands of the Dukes of Milan until Filippo Maria, in the hour of panic after Micheletto's victory at Casalmaggiore in 1446, sent an embassy to France promising to cede Asti on the day that a contingent of French troops crossed the Alps in his defence. His panic over, the Duke of Milan endeavoured to retract his promises, but, meanwhile, French troops had arrived in Italy. Only a day or two before Filippo Maria's death, they took possession of Asti and proceeded to proclaim the Duke of Orleans as the true heir to Milan. Other claimants through the female line were Albert and Sigismund of Hapsburg, the great-grandchildren of Bernabò Visconti. The Duke of Savoy hoped at least to recover Vercelli and the surrounding district,

which had only been yielded to Milan on the marriage of Maria of Savoy to Filippo Maria Visconti. Frederick III. also put in his claim to the Duchy as a fief which had lapsed to the Empire on the extinction of heirs male. Yet the real struggle lay not between any of these claimants but between the champions of the rival schools of soldiery within the walls of Milan. Bracceschi and Sforzeschi contended for the appointment of Filippo Maria's successor, as, in former years, they had striven for the control of his armies. At the moment of the Duke's death the Bracceschi were in possession of the field. Profiting by the inevitable reaction which followed on Visconti's reconciliation with Francesco Sforza, they so poisoned the Duke's mind against his son-in-law that he sent orders to Francesco not to come to Lombardy, and, the day before his death, he made a will appointing Alfonso of Naples as his successor. The Bracceschi, who regarded Alfonso as their candidate, acted upon their advantage with the utmost promptitude. During the night of 13th August, almost before Filippo Maria had breathed his last, Aragonese troops were introduced into the Castello, the captains in Visconti's service were persuaded to swear fealty to Alfonso, and by daybreak the banners of Aragon floated above the castle walls. Sforza's adherents might well feel that their cause was hopeless.

The triumph of Alfonso was, however, short-lived. Public opinion in Milan was not merely divided as to whether the King of Naples or Francesco Sforza should succeed to the throne of the Visconti. Many of the most thoughtful and influential citizens were considering the possibility of having no Duke at all. The days of the ancient Republic had not been forgotten, and existing circumstances were peculiarly calculated to make them appear in the light of a golden age. Learned bodies in Milan, notably the College of Jurisprudence, were led by their new-born enthusiasm for the classics to contrast the justice and stability of the rule of law with the caprices of the Visconti. Venice was then at the height of her power and prosperity. Hence the mercantile classes of Milan were anxious to copy her form of government in the hope of achieving a like success. At the same time Milan was filled to over-

flowing with workmen, disbanded soldiers and preferment hunters of every kind, who had been attracted thither by the splendours of the Visconti Court. The ranks of this floating population were further swelled by a crowd of peasants who had fled into the city to escape the ravages of the Venetian troops. One and all were prepared to play their part in any disturbance that might arise. Filippo Maria's life in the Castello had been so completely cut off from the outside world that his illness had hardly been realised in Milan, and the news of his death at once threw the city into confusion. Thereupon the advocates of liberty seized their opportunity. On the morning of 14th August, under the leadership of four members of the College of Jurisprudence (Antonio Trivulzio, Giorgio Lampugnano, Innocenzo Cotta and Teodoro Bossi), the populace gathered behind the Palace of the Commune and proclaimed the Golden Ambrosian Republic. Filippo Maria's captains disregarded their oath to Alfonso and threw in their lot with the Republic. Thanks to their aid, the Aragonese troops were driven from Milan. A few days later Niccolò Guarna, one of the friends who had written to urge Sforza's coming, sent him the following news: "The Castello is in the hands of this community and its destruction has already been begun. The fortress has raised the banner of S. Ambrose."¹

The Ambrosian Republic had entered upon its career amid general enthusiasm and with some degree of triumph. Yet the difficulties which lay before it were enormous. Francesco Filelfo read the signs of the times aright when he wrote of the "vehement storms and tempests" which were impending upon the political horizon.² With the ducal authority in abeyance the government of Milan fell back upon the old municipal constitution, which must needs be adapted to the requirements of a large territorial State. Moreover, this process of adaptation, delicate and difficult enough in itself, must be carried on in the midst of a war with Venice, when the forces of the enemy might

¹ Beltrami, L., *Il Castello di Milano sotto il dominio degli Sforza*. Milan, 1894.

² Peluso, F., *Storia della Repubblica Milanese dall'anno 1447 al 1450*, p. 313. Milan, 1871.

at any moment appear before the gates of Milan. Theoretically the supreme authority in Milan was the Council of Nine Hundred, composed of a hundred and fifty representatives from each gate and to which all lawyers and soldiers above a certain rank had right of entrance. Yet it had been rarely summoned by the Visconti, and it had never been called upon to frame laws but only to accept or reject the measures which were laid before it. It was clear that such a body was altogether unsuitable for carrying on the work of government. Hence a committee of twenty-four, known as the Captains and Defenders of the Liberty of Milan, was elected on 14th August to "rule, govern and defend the city in peace and war" until January, 1448. Although the Council of Nine Hundred was summoned four days later to confirm the election, this committee was as much outside the ordinary constitution as had been the ducal authority. Nevertheless, the Captains and Defenders became henceforth the true rulers of Milan. The list of the first twenty-four, which contains representatives of the leading families in Milan and a large proportion of distinguished lawyers, shows that the revolution had been primarily an aristocratic rather than a democratic movement, and that the fortunes of the Republic rested with those citizens who would be most likely to prove capable of governing.

Apart from this new committee, the constitution of Milan remained practically unchanged. The Podestà and Captain still remained at the head of justice and police, while the existing Podestà was confirmed in his office, for the next four months, by the Council of Nine Hundred. The Council also elected a new Vicar of Provision who, with his twelve colleagues, formed a sort of town council for the regulation of the markets and for the general administration of the city. Six nobles were chosen as Magistrates of the Revenues, in place of Filippo Maria's Finance Committee. At the same time another body of twenty-four was created to manage the property of the Republic and to exercise the functions of the former Ducal Councillors.

So far all had gone well, and within the walls of Milan the success of the infant Republic seemed complete. The real difficulty lay, however, with the subject-towns of the Duchy,

who had recognised Visconti as their lord, but whose deep-seated jealousy of Milan made them very unlikely to accept her authority. These cities soon made it clear that they had no intention of submitting to the Ambrosian Republic. Pavia rejected all overtures on the part of her ancient rival and proclaimed her independence. Lodi and Piacenza called in the Venetians, while Alessandria, Novara and Como alone remained loyal to Milan. The defection of the subject-towns was a serious blow to the Ambrosian Republic, especially in the matter of finance. In the first burst of republican enthusiasm, the twenty-four Captains had burned the books relating to taxation, declaring that the day of heavy burdens was at an end, and that henceforth it would be only necessary to contribute to the treasure of S. Ambrose, and to the maintenance of the army. With a practically empty exchequer such a measure was the height of imprudence, and before the end of August it was found necessary to reimpose the customs and the grist tax to meet the needs of the moment. When the Republic further lost the greater part of the tribute due from the subject-towns, it found itself in possession of something like one-fourth of the revenues enjoyed by the Duke, while there was no corresponding diminution of expenses. To remedy the difficulty thirty citizens were elected to assess a new tax on all within the dominions of the Republic "to the amount that should seem to them just".¹ In other words, taxation had become as arbitrary and as uncertain as it had been during the worst periods of Visconti rule.

Meanwhile every effort had been made to end the war with Venice. On the occupation of Lodi and Piacenza, the Ambrosian Republic, with pathetic naïvety, sent ambassadors to Venice begging the ancient Republic not to harm her new sister but to further the cause of liberty by accepting her offers of friendship. The Venetians, as might be expected, treated these proposals of peace with derision, for they saw in the change of government an opportunity for adding the greater part of the Milanese to their own dominions. Hence Milan must needs collect an army and prepare to renew the conflict to the best of her ability. Under these circumstances her thoughts turned

¹ Peluso, F., pp. 71-73.

naturally towards Francesco Sforza, the greatest soldier of the day, and who, but for Filippo Maria's death, would have been at that moment in Milanese service. Antonio Trivulzio was thereupon despatched to Sforza's camp, and on 30th August a treaty was made at Parma by which Sforza agreed to serve the Ambrosian Republic on the same terms as those which he had made with the late Duke. It was expressly stipulated that Francesco should not attempt to keep for himself any of the cities which he might conquer, with the exception of Brescia. This, however, should form his share of the spoils unless Verona were also conquered, in which case he would keep the latter city, giving up Brescia to Milan.

The news that Milan had declared itself a Republic could not but be mortifying to Francesco Sforza. It seemed as though he had sacrificed his hold on the March of Ancona for a chimera, and that the prize which he had believed to be within his grasp was as far off as ever. As was his custom at the critical moments of his career, he turned for advice to Cosimo dei Medici, who urged him to go boldly on his way regardless of the new difficulties which lay between him and his goal. Too many rival interests were centred in Romagna for Sforza to be able to found a secure dominion there, whereas in Milan he might still gain by perseverance and diplomacy what was denied to him by peaceful succession. Thus the Milanese ambassadors found Sforza ready to listen to their overtures. He had resolved, according to the characteristic Italian phrase, to yield to the times (*piegarsi ai tempi*) and to serve Milan as a captain in the hope that it might lead in the end to his ruling her as a prince. Without a moment's delay Francesco threw himself into preparations for war. His wife and children were left at Cremona, Francesco and Jacopo Piccinino were persuaded to bury their former enmity and to accept posts of command in Sforza's army. Bartolomeo Colleone was also taken into the service of the Republic. Finally, on 13th September, a decree was proclaimed in Milan ordering all those who loved their present state of liberty and who were capable of bearing arms to join Francesco Sforza in the field. The ease with which these negotiations had been concluded could not, however, overcome the fatal flaw which

must exist in any alliance between Sforza and the Ambrosian Republic. It was the usual *condottiere* difficulty in a peculiarly acute form. From a military point of view, the welfare of the Republic demanded absolute confidence in Sforza as a general, yet for political reasons this confidence was impossible, as few could doubt that he would play for his own hand if an opportunity presented itself.

Hardly had the war begun before an event occurred which revealed to the full the difficulties of the situation. Sforza began hostilities by attacking San Colombano, a town between Pavia and Lodi, which had been occupied by the Venetians. Thither Pavia, already conscious of her inability to maintain her lately acquired liberty, sent an offer to receive him as lord. The fortress was in the hands of a certain Matteo di Bologna, popularly known as Il Bolognino, who, owing to the influence of Bianca's mother, Agnese del Maino, was prepared to yield it to Sforza. On the mere rumour of the offer, ambassadors from Milan were sent to protest against its acceptance, as a contravention of Sforza's recent treaty with the Ambrosian Republic. Yet if Sforza refused, Pavia would yield to Venice, and its arsenal, powder magazines and treasure, which might have aided the cause of Milan, would be placed at the disposal of the enemy. Hence the Council of Nine Hundred reluctantly allowed Sforza to take possession of Pavia with the title of Count. At the same time they consoled themselves by secretly negotiating with Venice with a view to peace.

Meanwhile Francesco was solemnly received in Pavia as Count. He promised in the capitulations to respect the ancient privileges of the city, to raise no new taxes, to pay his own officials, and to devote a certain portion of the revenues to the repair of the walls and bridges. To these conditions he strictly adhered, and from that time the citizens of Pavia were among the most loyal subjects of the House of Sforza. Bolognino, to whom Francesco owed his good fortune, remained in charge of the Castello and was adopted into the family of the Attendoli in token of his services. His more substantial reward was the Castle of S. Angelo, near Lodi, which remained in the possession of the Counts Attendoli Bolognini until comparatively

modern times. Sforza had, indeed, every cause to be grateful to the man by whose means he had become lord of this second capital of the Milanese. The Castello with its jewels and treasures of every description, its plentiful supply of weapons and ammunition, its walls covered with frescoes and its magnificent library, filled him with wonder and admiration. In all Italy, he declared, from the Alps to Messina, he had not seen its equal. Pavia was peculiarly valuable to Sforza owing to the command of the Po which the city possessed through her fleet. Although most of the ships were in bad repair, Francesco was able to launch a few at once, while he ordered fresh vessels to be prepared in the arsenal for future use. Not only would the fleet serve to guard Cremona, but it would aid in the undertaking upon which all efforts were now to be concentrated, namely, the siege of Piacenza. Early in October Sforza's armies were planted round the city, while four ships from Pavia guarded the Po and so prevented the Venetians from relieving Piacenza by water. The river, swollen by autumn rains, formed an easy route for the provisions coming from Pavia, and not even a feint of the Venetians in the direction of Milan could make Sforza relax his hold on the beleaguered city. Piacenza, however, with a newly stored harvest was well stocked with supplies, and when, in December, there seemed no immediate prospect of surrender Sforza decided to take the city by storm. Such an undertaking was almost unheard-of at that date, for in the use of artillery Sforza was in advance of his time. By means of his cannon he contrived to make a breach in the walls, which were held to be well-nigh impregnable, and thus to gain possession of the city. The sack which followed left Piacenza in ruins, and it has been spoken of as a blot on Sforza's name. Yet his troops had grown weary with the long siege, and the promise of plunder had alone persuaded them to make the attack. Hence it would have been hard for Francesco to act otherwise, and he at least did his best to provide places of refuge for women and children by guarding the hospitals and monasteries.

The news of the fall of Piacenza was received in Milan with three days' public rejoicing, yet such was the mistrust of

the Republic towards its Captain-General that his victories occasioned almost as much alarm as did those of the enemy. During the siege of Piacenza, Colleone had been engaged on the Western frontiers of the Duchy against the French garrison from Asti which was skirmishing in the district round Alessandria. On learning that the inhabitants of Tortona had proclaimed Sforza as their lord, Colleone attacked the town and succeeded in making himself master of it. This incident was the cause of far greater rejoicing in Milan than was the recapture of Piacenza from Venice.

In January, 1448, the original Captains of the Republic went out of office, and those who were elected to take their place represented rather those Guelphic nobles who were allied with the merchant class than the Ghibelline aristocracy who were prominent in the early days of the Republic. From the Guelphs sprung the greater part of the opposition to Sforza, and thus the change of government resulted in renewed efforts after peace. By means of the Piccinini brothers, who were always ready to intrigue against Sforza even when they were fighting under his banner, a secret conference was held between ambassadors from Milan and Venice at Bergamo. Venice, however, had the smallest opinion of the Ambrosian Republic, and she would not consent to relinquish any of her conquests. Nevertheless, such was the hatred and fear of Sforza that the Council of Nine Hundred was persuaded to agree to peace on the terms which Venice might dictate. To such men as Giorgio Lampugnano and Teodoro Bossi peace under such humiliating conditions appeared in the light of a national disgrace. They contrived to infuse the populace with their sentiments, and the mob surrounded the Court of Arengo, where the Council of Nine Hundred were sitting, shouting "*Guerra! Guerra!*" In the face of this demonstration the attempt at peace was abandoned. Sforza was allowed to prepare for a fresh campaign, but it was made clear from the first that it would be conducted according to the ideas of the Republic and not according to those of the Captain-General. The fact that a campaign fought under these conditions should be marked

by two of Sforza's most celebrated victories forms no small testimony to his military talents.

In all the wars between Milan and Venice the river system of Lombardy played an important part. Both powers possessed fleets which struggled with one another for the command of the Po, and more especially for the command of the three towns of Piacenza, Cremona and Casalmaggiore, which guarded the river at different points. Besides this, the rivers running northward from the Po divided the country into distinct blocks. The land campaigns of the Lombard wars usually took the form of a contest for the possession of one among these strips of country. At the beginning of the struggle with Visconti the frontiers of Venice did not go beyond the Mincio. Now her influence extended not only to the strip between the Mincio and the Oglio but to that between the Oglio and the Adda, while the possession of Lodi on the western bank of the Adda brought her into the district between the Adda and the Ticino, in which Milan itself lay. Milan's great object in the campaign of 1448 was to wrest the command of the Adda from Venice. In Sforza's opinion this could best be done by transferring the war into the district between the Oglio and the Mincio. He proposed to attack the Venetian fleet which was threatening Cremona and to strike from thence to Brescia. By this means the Venetians would be drawn off from the Adda, and Lodi would be isolated. The Ambrosian Republic, however, favoured the simpler plan of besieging Lodi. It was suggested that Sforza only wished to attack Brescia in order to gain it for himself. In the words of a certain Broccardo Persico, an intimate of the Piccinini and one of Sforza's bitterest foes, "the Milanese fostered in their bosom a great serpent who daily increased his own fortune at their expense". Hence Francesco must needs concentrate his forces on Lodi, conscious all the while that he was wasting time which could be employed to far greater advantage elsewhere. Meanwhile the Venetian fleet under Andrea Quirini was making a determined effort against the bridge at Cremona. When some of the enemy contrived to plant the banner of S. Mark on the bridge, it seemed that both it and Cremona itself must be taken. They

were saved by the promptitude of Bianca Sforza, who acted on that occasion "not like a woman but like a bold captain". Sending post-haste for reinforcements which she knew to be in the neighbourhood, she repulsed the enemy with their aid. At the same time she wrote to warn her husband, and in the face of such imminent danger he was at last allowed to move on the Venetian fleet. At the head of his troops, thankful to be delivered from the tedium of a siege, Francesco made a dash for Cremona, to find that the Venetian fleet had moved off and had entrenched itself behind stakes in a narrow branch of the Po at Casalmaggiore. Micheletto Attendolo, who, with the Venetian land forces, was only seven miles off, hoped to enclose Sforza between the army and the fleet. Yet he had not reckoned upon the efficiency of Sforza's artillery, which wrought havoc among the Venetian ships from the northern bank of the Po before Micheletto could bring up his troops. Worse still, the ships found the way of escape barred by the Milanese fleet. The stakes behind which the Venetians had posted themselves only permitted the exit of one vessel at a time. Hence each ship in turn fell a prey to the enemy, until Quirini was forced to withdraw into Casalmaggiore, burning the vessels that had not been already destroyed or captured to prevent them from falling into Sforza's hands. Thus Venice lost her whole fleet of seventy vessels, and on 18th July the bells of Milan were pealing at the news of this great victory. Success, however, only made the Ambrosian Republic more self-confident and, if anything, more suspicious of Sforza. Earlier in the year Francesco had driven the Venetians from the greater part of the district known as the Ghiarad'adda which lay along the eastern shores of the Adda, north of Lodi. Yet Caravaggio, one of the most important towns in the district, was still in the hands of the enemy. This being so, the rulers of Milan would hear not a word in favour of a diversion on Brescia. They were determined to tie Sforza down to the Ghiarad'adda, until the taking of Lodi and Caravaggio made it possible to end the war.

By the end of July Sforza had sat down before Caravaggio. Here, too, the bulk of the Venetian forces gathered in defence

of the town. Various skirmishes took place between the two armies, yet nothing occurred to break the siege until on 15th September Micheletto, fearing every moment that Caravaggio would yield, determined on a general attack. The Venetians approached from an unexpected quarter, and Sforza was so completely taken by surprise that he did not have time to put on his full armour. Yet the discipline which he maintained among his troops could stand the test of panic. Encouraged by his example the men threw themselves into the battle, and in two hours a victory had been won which Corio describes as "great and memorable, not only in our own times but in the ages to come". When the commissaries of the Ambrosian Republic returned to Milan, with three of the Venetian generals and the two *provveditori* among their prisoners, and went in state to place the banner of S. Mark in the Cathedral, it seemed to the enthusiastic citizens for all the world "like a triumph of ancient Rome". Yet in the midst of the general rejoicing there was little sign of gratitude towards the conqueror. The Captains and Defenders of Liberty were more than ever determined on peace, and Sforza was ordered to proceed without delay to Lodi. Meanwhile the country round Brescia was in full revolt, and several fortresses sent their keys to Sforza begging him to come and take possession of the district. With the prospect of winning Brescia before him, and with his troops eager for fresh triumphs, it required more than human nature on Francesco's part to return quietly to his old occupation of besieging Lodi. Even the Milanese commissaries saw that it was a moment in which to follow up their victory by carrying the war into the enemy's country, and thus Sforza was at length permitted to cross the Oglio. Yet while Francesco mustered his forces round Brescia, his enemies, headed by the Piccinini and Erasmo Trivulzio, were diligently working against him. The Piccinini, who had come to Milan after Caravaggio, obtained permission not to return to Sforza's camp but to proceed instead to Lodi, while peace negotiations were once more opened by means of the Milanese merchants in Venice. Sforza received instructions to abandon Brescia and to withdraw into the neighbourhood of Verona, and the envoy who was charged with these orders

spent his leisure moments in circulating a rumour in the camp that those troops which remained with Sforza must not look to the Ambrosian Republic for payment. At the same time Brescia was secretly encouraged to hold out until the approaching peace should end the siege. When, after the discovery of this treachery on the part of Milan, Sforza was approached by the Venetians with offers of alliance, it is hardly surprising that he consented to listen to them. The Venetians, on their side, saw that Sforza alone prevented them from gaining all that they desired of Milanese territory, and thus they turned a deaf ear to the proposals of the Republic while they did their utmost to win Sforza for themselves. Francesco should receive thirteen thousand ducats a month from Venice until he had made himself master of the whole Duchy of Milan if he would agree to hand over Crema and the Ghiarad'adda to the Venetians as their share of the spoils. Meanwhile Sforza must abandon the siege of Brescia and the conquests which he had made in the territory while the Venetians would withdraw from Lodi. On 18th October the treaty was signed according to these terms, and Sforza passed to the side of Venice.

Sforza's action in making a separate treaty with the enemy while he was in the service of the Ambrosian Republic is one which it may be impossible to justify, but for which it is nevertheless easy to find excuses. However much the Ambrosian Republic might fear Sforza politically, they made a fatal mistake in not trusting to his ability and good faith as a soldier. The danger to the Republic would arise when in her joy at the successful termination of the war Milan might proclaim the all too willing Sforza as their lord. But so long as Sforza was fighting Venice his interests were those of his employers, and he sought only to carry on the war in the way most conducive to success. In this he found himself hampered at every turn by those who should have helped him. In view of repeated negotiations with Venice unknown to the Captain-General, and the double game which was played with regard to Brescia, Sforza's treachery seems but the natural reply to the treachery of the Ambrosian Republic. Time was soon to prove, moreover, that Sforza alone could save the Duchy of Milan from

dismemberment. It might seem at first sight as if Sforza's alliance with Venice had undone his former labours, and that he would now have to reconquer the places which he had won for the Ambrosian Republic during the last year. Yet Pavia and Cremona were not alone in regarding Sforza rather than Milan as their sovereign. On the news of Francesco's alliance with Venice Piacenza at once offered herself to him, and before the year was out Novara, Tortona, Alessandria and Vigevano had willingly surrendered him their keys. Thus, from the point of view of the prosperity and peace of Lombardy, Sforza's action finds ample justification. If he aimed at depriving Milan of her liberty, he would also preserve the autonomy of the Duchy and save it from being split up among a number of petty republics, a prey to their own quarrels and to the aggressions of their more powerful neighbours.

Meanwhile events within Milan were making it daily more apparent that the Ambrosian Republic was doomed to failure. The would-be rulers of a large territory had shown themselves unable to enforce their authority within the walls of one city. During the year 1448 the garrison of the Castello, having plundered the houses in the neighbourhood until they were left deserted, stole the materials of the ruined fortress and sold them in the city for their own profit, finding an extensive purchaser in the Fabbbrica del Duomo. Thieves made raids on the country round and carried off provisions and cattle in the name of the Government. The mob frequently took the law into their own hands and ransacked the houses of those who were suspected of disloyalty to the Republic. Edicts were published assigning the most severe punishments to these crimes, yet it is clear that they were nothing more than threats. The workmen who neglected their task of fortifying the Porta Ticinese, for example, were threatened with the gallows, but in the end the Republic only endeavoured to bring home to them the error of their ways by rewarding their more industrious companions. Hand-in-hand with this weakness went suspicion. Not only did the heads of the Republic live in constant fear of intrigues against the Government, but they also suspected their own officials of wishing to undermine their authority. Hence the

Podestà was endowed with absolute powers, extending even to life and death, against all involved in political conspiracies, while Carlo Gonzaga was appointed Captain of the People in November, 1447, in order that another military authority might exist as a counterfoil to that of Sforza. At the same time three lieutenants were chosen to act as a check upon the new captain. Such multiplication of officials imposed additional burdens on the Republic and stood in the way of efficiency, while it could not prevent a strong man from becoming powerful. Meanwhile the Republic must seek to replenish its exchequer by means of fines and confiscations and by instituting a State lottery. Regardless of the many urgent matters which demanded the attention of the Republic during the first year of its existence, the Government wasted time over measures, estimable enough in themselves, but of quite secondary importance. In March, 1448, for example, a scheme for a University at Milan was mooted and an elaborate list of professors was drawn up. Yet, in those troublous times, the professors could have found few pupils, and there was certainly no money forthcoming for their salaries. The whole movement sprang less from any love of learning than from the desire to injure the University of Pavia and to prevent Milan from being in any way dependent upon the rival city. Edicts for the enforcement of morality and of religious observances are prominent in the statute books of the time. Instead of providing for the defence of Milan, the Republic passed decrees forbidding barbers to shave on Saints' days.¹ It is, however, only fair to give the Captains and Defenders due credit for their efforts to stamp out the plague. An officer of public health was appointed to whom cases of illness were reported by the head of each parish; priests were forbidden to bury without a written license, and persons coming from infected places were not allowed to enter the city. Thanks to these measures, Milan was practically free from plague during the whole career of the Ambrosian Republic.

¹ Cf. Formentini, *Ducato di Milano*. Decree of October, 1447. The days were reckoned from sunset to sunset. Hence a special clause was added to the effect that if a barber were actually shaving a customer at this hour, he should be allowed to finish.

In spite of its obvious defects, the Ambrosian Republic might still have been able to hold its own but for its failure to override the factions which divided Milan. The tendency to oust the Ghibellines from power, which was first seen in the elections of January, 1448, became more marked as time went on, until, in 1449, the new magistracy was drawn almost entirely from the middle classes who looked to the Guelphic nobles for support. A certain notary, Giovanni Appiani, and Giovanni Ossona, whom Corio describes as a "low tradesman," became prominent in public affairs. These men found a leader in Carlo Gonzaga, who had from the first done much to widen the breach in the Government, by throwing himself hotly on the side of the Guelphs. Soon after the alliance between Sforza and Venice, Milan had witnessed a wave of popular feeling in Francesco's favour, which had only been subdued by an eloquent plea for liberty on the part of Giorgio Lampugnano. Now, to guard against another such reaction, the authority of Carlo Gonzaga was increased until it amounted practically to a dictatorship. The magnificence of his house in Milan and his lavish hospitality clearly indicated that Gonzaga aimed still higher. Nothing would better further his ambitions than to substitute for the original leaders of the Republic a class of men whom ignorance of the art of government would render subservient to his will. Unless something were done to check him, the Republic would speedily be transformed into the worst kind of tyranny to which even Sforza's triumph would be preferable. Such was the opinion of Lampugnano and his Ghibelline friends who gathered in the house of Vitaliano Borromeo to discuss the situation. They thereupon decided to open negotiations with Sforza with a view to placing Milan in his hands. Frequent communications passed between Sforza's camp at Landriano and the Ghibellines within the city, but unfortunately the negotiations did not escape Gonzaga's vigilance. His suspicions once aroused, Gonzaga contrived to intercept some letters directed to Teodoro Bossi, which revealed to him the extent of the conspiracy. It was no easy matter to arrest conspirators who were drawn from the most influential families in Milan, but the Captains and Defenders of Liberty were determined to avenge

themselves on the Ghibellines. They therefore had recourse to a stratagem of which Giorgio Lampugnano and Teodoro Bossi were the victims. The leaders of the Ambrosian Republic, although they refused to submit to the Emperor, had from the first been anxious to secure his protection and support. Thus Lampugnano and Bossi agreed without suspicion to go on a special embassy to the Court of Frederick III. They had hardly started on their way to Como before they were captured and thrown into prison in the Castle of Monza. Lampugnano was beheaded without any form of trial, and his head was carried on a pike to Milan to be exhibited on the Piazza of the Broletto. The details of the conspiracy and the names of his accomplices were extracted from Bossi by means of torture, and there followed a massacre of the leading Ghibellines in Milan. Some, such as Vitaliano Borromeo, contrived to escape, but a considerable number of heads joined that of Lampugnano on the Piazza of the Broletto, in order that all might see the fate of those who intrigued against the Republic. Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini, who was in Milan during the greater part of the republican period in order to further the interests of his master Frederick III., makes special mention of the fate of "that great champion of liberty," Giorgio Lampugnano. He was indeed the hero and martyr of the Ambrosian Republic. Æneas Sylvius describes how Lampugnano, in his enthusiasm for the cause of liberty, tore up the will of Filippo Maria Visconti appointing Alfonso of Aragon as his heir. He had shown himself since then as active in promoting the best interests of the Republic as he had been originally in bringing it into existence. "Be prudent," Francesco Filelfo had once written to him. "Beware of meddling too much in public affairs. Remember that all those who have sought glory in the conflict of political passions have perished miserably."¹ Yet the warnings of the humanist who supported the Republic for the sake of what he could obtain from it, while he contemptuously prophesied its fall, could not turn the political idealist from his path nor prevent a tragedy which deprived the Ambrosian Republic of its most whole-hearted champion.

¹ Cf. Peluso, F., *op. cit.*, p. 186.

The overthrow of the Ghibellines took place in February, 1449. From this time Milan began to lose confidence in the Captains and Defenders, who, for their part, sought to counteract the general feeling of insecurity and unrest by violent measures of repression. Not only was it made punishable by death to speak against the existing Government, but persons found collecting and talking in groups were liable to be dragged before the Captain of the People, who called upon them to prove that their communications were not treasonable if they wished to escape the gallows. The responsibility for this reign of terror has usually been laid on the shoulders of Ossona and Appiano, yet it is probable that they were more deluded than guilty, and that the real blame rests with men of higher rank, and more especially with Ambrogio Trivulzio, whose signature "Ambrosius" figures on many edicts of the period. Although originally one of the ancient Ghibelline families of Milan, the Trivulzi, by long opposition to the Visconti Dukes and by a factiousness which made them the enemy of any Government that they could not control, had become the natural leaders of the Guelphs. Throughout the republican period the brothers Ambrogio and Erasmo Trivulzio, with their nephew Antonio, were prominent in public affairs and in their opposition to Sforza. The Trivulzio Palace in Porta Romana formed a centre for Sforza's enemies, just as the houses of the Pusterla in Porta Ticinese became the rallying-place of his friends. Just fifty years later a Sforza Duke, flying before an invading army led by the most distinguished member of the House of Trivulzio, had good cause to remember this ancient rivalry.

The twenty-four Captains and Defenders who were now elected for two months should have gone out of office in April. Hence the refusal of the party in power to allow the elections to take place only intensified the general discontent. When, at the beginning of June, the elections could no longer be deferred, they resulted in the triumph of the opposite faction, and Ghibelline names such as Castiglione and Pusterla appear in the list of successful candidates. The new Government succeeded in restoring some measure of tranquillity, but their excessive zeal in imprisoning Ossona and Appiano and in undoing

the work of their predecessors produced a fresh popular agitation in Milan. On the last day of July the mob attacked the Captains and Defenders of Liberty while they were deliberating upon the elections of the morrow, and cut to pieces a certain Galeotto Toscano who failed to make his escape. The extremists were restored to power, and their first edict forbade all on pain of death to mention the name of either Francesco Sforza or his wife except in disrespect. These last acts of violence disgusted even Carlo Gonzaga. For some time he had been conscious that his influence in Milan was on the wane. Now when the newly elected Captains were exulting over the wanton murder of his personal friend Toscano, he determined to abandon the Ambrosian Republic to its fate. On 11th September Gonzaga rode out of Milan, going nominally to aid the besieged city of Crema and its gallant defender Gaspare da Vimercate, in reality that he might make his peace with Sforza by offering to place Crema and Lodi in his hands.

During this year of disturbance within the walls of Milan Francesco Sforza had been carrying on the war with somewhat varying success. His anomalous position as the ally of Venice and the enemy of the Ambrosian Republic could not fail to carry with it certain disadvantages. In the midst of the negotiations with the Venetians, for instance, Lodi opened her gates to Piccinino and Sforza lost a city through a siege which he had himself conducted. In the same way Parma held persistently to that attitude of neutrality towards the Ambrosian Republic which Sforza had once made it his object to secure. It was only after Lionello d'Este's refusal to accept the *signoria* that the town eventually yielded to Alessandro Sforza.

The former claimants to the Duchy, moreover, realising that Sforza was a far more dangerous competitor than the Ambrosian Republic, placed themselves on the side of his foes. Thus in the spring of 1449 the widowed Duchess of Milan persuaded her brother Louis of Savoy to make war round Novara in alliance with the Republic. Sforza thereupon appealed to the old Duke Amadeus VIII. to stop his son's interference in a quarrel which concerned the representative of the Visconti and the citizens of Milan alone. Amadeus had no

wish to check the laudable ambitions of his son, and he replied from Rome, where he was engaged in resigning his office as anti-Pope, that his occupation with matters spiritual prevented him from concerning himself with matters temporal. Hence Sforza must needs send an army under Colleone, which put an end to Louis's enterprise by a decisive victory at Borgomanero. It did not, however, put an end to his ambitions. From this period dates a curious treaty between Louis of Savoy and the Dauphin of France for the partition of Milan. Genoa and Lucca should be added to the possessions of France, Alessandria should fall to Montferrat, and the rest of the Duchy north of the Po and west of the Adda should be annexed by the Duke of Savoy. The treaty produced no tangible results, and it is not even certain whether the French King was privy to it, yet it shows the strength of Sforza's rivals and the reality of the French ambitions with regard to Italy.

Another of Sforza's difficulties during this period concerned his relations with his captains. When Francesco announced his alliance with Venice to the assembled troops and bade all serve whom they would, the captains who remained loyal to Sforza did so with a view to furthering definite ambitions. Roberto San Severino and his brothers clung to Sforza in order to maintain a hold on their fiefs in the Ghiarad'adda. Luigi dal Verme aimed at becoming Lord of Piacenza, and Sforza was obliged to propitiate him by marrying his illegitimate son to Dal Verme's only daughter. Guglielmo of Montferrat was bribed to Francesco's side by the fief of Alessandria and by the cession of the Visconti claims upon Turin. Such a method of obtaining captains was obviously expensive, and it proved no safeguard against treachery or desertion. Not many months later Sforza imprisoned Guglielmo of Montferrat in the Castello of Pavia, having discovered that he was about to withdraw his troops from the camp in order to further his own interests round Alessandria. Sforza aimed apparently at depriving Milan of her captains at all costs. Yet, in view of their persistent enmity, it seemed the height of rashness to accept the services of the Piccinini brothers, who, having

quarrelled with Gonzaga, left Milan for Sforza's camp. Sforza's mistake was brought home to him through the loss of Monza, which was on the point of surrendering to the Sforzeschi when Francesco Piccinino treacherously allowed Gonzaga to enter the city. Having once more proved themselves "most gifted in the art of deception," the Piccinini returned to Milan, only three months after they had left the city for Sforza's camp.

Sforza's disadvantages and difficulties were, however, more than compensated by the fact that he could now fight openly in his own interests. Instead of winning cities for the Ambrosian Republic, in the hope that the Republic itself might eventually fall beneath his control, Sforza could make the conquest of Milan the primary object of his campaign. The treaty of October, 1448, had assigned to Venice practically the whole district between the Oglio and the Adda. Hence during the war of 1449 Sforza left the Venetians to complete their conquests in that quarter, while he concentrated his efforts upon the adjoining block between the Adda and the Ticino. Knowing that he could not take Milan by storm, Sforza prepared to make a ring fence round the city with his troops, in order that it might be starved into surrender. At the outset of the campaign Sforza obtained Abbiategrasso, from whence he proceeded to occupy the fertile districts of Seprio and Brianza, north of Milan. By this means the capital was deprived both of her best granaries and of the water supply which came by a canal flowing from the Ticino at Abbiategrasso. During the year which followed Francesco never once relaxed his hold on the Milanese. As one by one the places which served as a means of getting supplies into Milan fell into Sforza's hands, the famine in the city became more acute. The success of the Ambrosian Republic with regard to Monza proved but an isolated incident in a long course of failure. When Gonzaga approached Sforza with the offer of Crema and Lodi, Milan's chances of being able to maintain herself as an independent State were already gone. During the summer months Marignano, Vigevano, Tortona and Pizzighettone had one after the other made humble submission to the conqueror, while the Venetians only needed Crema to complete their share

of the Visconti inheritance. Now Gonzaga proposed to yield Crema not to Venice but to Sforza. Francesco, however, while he at once sent troops to take possession of Lodi and invested Gonzaga with the fief of Tortona as a reward for his services, remained loyal to his treaty with the Venetians. Hence Crema, left without support, was forced to surrender to Venice.

Once more, when Sforza seemed on the eve of success, fortune turned against him in a way that might well cause him to despair. For some time past Venice had begun to realise that her interests would be better served by bolstering up the weak Ambrosian Republic than by aiding a powerful soldier to destroy it. The Venetian *provveditore* Marcello wrote from the seat of war to warn his Senate against Sforza, whose talents filled him with fear and admiration. Such a man, in Marcello's opinion, was bound to succeed, and when he became Duke of Milan, Venice would have cause to regret that she had aided his progress. Hence, when the acquisition of Crema gave to Venice all that she claimed by the treaty of October, 1448, she was ready to listen to the overtures of the Ambrosian Republic.

On 24th September a treaty was published which, while confirming Venice in the possession of the district between the Oglio and the Adda, gave that between the Adda and the Ticino to the Ambrosian Republic. Pavia, although on the eastern bank of the Ticino, was left to Sforza, who but for this and for Cremona and Piacenza would hold only the strip of country which lay farthest west, between the Ticino and the Sesia. Sforza was given twenty days in which to ratify the peace. If he refused Venice would take arms in defence of her newly-found sister and ally. In short, Venice, having obtained her own share of the spoils, was prepared to make Sforza divide his with the Ambrosian Republic.

The news of the treaty was received in Milan with every sign of rejoicing. It seemed to the distressed citizens that they had come to the end of their troubles, for who could imagine that a *condottiere*, however powerful, would carry on a single-handed struggle against the combined forces of Milan and Venice? So confident were they of peace that they used their remaining stores of grain in sowing the next season's crops.

Yet the alliance between Milan and Venice, which a year earlier would have been a fatal blow to Sforza, had come too late to harm him. He resolved to continue the struggle, confident that if he could contrive to delay the junction of the Milanese and Venetian arms for a few months only, Milan would be forced to surrender. Hence the over-confidence of the inhabitants in exhausting their supplies served to hasten Sforza's triumph.

Before war began again Sforza set himself to make peace with Savoy, realising that the intervention of another power at this critical moment might prove fatal to his cause. Thanks to the apathy of Louis of Savoy the peace was secured at the cost of some castles round Novara and Alessandria which Sforza could well afford to lose. Meanwhile the Milanese lost their best general owing to the death of Francesco Piccinino. The Venetians were now commanded by Sforza's old enemy in the March of Ancona, Sigismondo Malatesta, who opened the campaign by a desperate attempt to cross the Adda, in order to unite with the forces of the Ambrosian Republic under Jacopo Piccinino. Malatesta contrived to get his troops across the river at Brivio, only to be driven back again by Sforza. In January, 1450, the two armies were still divided, when Colleone proposed to reach the Milanese by way of the Bergamo valleys and the Lecco branch of the Lake of Como. Colleone's scheme was successfully carried out, and early in February Sforza learned in his camp at Vimercate that Piccinino and Malatesta had joined forces preparatory to marching on his rear. Sforza's captains were for retiring to Pavia and Lodi in order to avoid an encounter with the enemy. Francesco had learned, however, from a commissary of the Republic, who had lately fallen into his hands, that Milan was reduced to the last extremity of want. Rather than abandon the fruits of the siege he determined at all costs to remain in the open field. On 26th February the end came, and ambassadors rode out from Milan to hail Sforza as the successor of the Visconti Dukes.

It would be hard to over-estimate the miserable condition of Milan during the early days of 1450. A letter written by one Giovanni Teruffino to his Adorni friends in Genoa as early as April, 1449, describes a state of misgovernment which enhanced

the horrors of the famine and which was rapidly driving the citizens to desperation. "Owing to the lack of food, money and fodder, and to the infinite number of malcontents," the letter concludes, "if His Excellency the Count (Sforza) approached Milan, the city would not hold out for a fortnight. May God so rule that this our province shall have peace."¹ The contemporary historian Decembrio, who was among the supporters of the Ambrosian Republic, has the same tale to tell. "Affairs in Milan began to go from bad to worse. Owing to the loss of our dukes and to dissensions among the citizens, fresh schemes were formed daily of which each one was worse than the last. . . . The populace was tossed hither and thither like a ship in a storm."²

At length, on 24th February, the Council of Nine Hundred met in the Church of S. Maria della Scala, and a crowd collected round the doors, eager to hear of some change of policy. As the mob grew more vehement an attempt was made to disperse it, but the appearance of a body of mounted police, headed by the Captain of Justice, only served to kindle the exasperated citizens to action. Before the fury of the popular onslaught the police fled discomfited. Thereupon, the insurgents elected Piero Cotta and Gaspare da Vimercate as their leaders, and, amid cries of "To the Arengo," they rushed from the Piazza della Scala to vent their anger upon the Captains and Defenders of Liberty. The Court of Arengo proved to be well guarded and the first attack upon it was repulsed. The movement seemed likely to end in disordered flight when the tide was turned by a lad named Francesco Trivulzio. "Why do we fly," he cried, "when no one pursues us?" Emboldened by his words, the citizens made a second attempt upon the Court of Arengo. In the gathering dusk they effected an entrance through the apartments of Maria of Savoy, and soon the palace was swarming with an angry throng, eager for a victim. At the head of the stairs the crowd came upon the Venetian ambassador, Veniero. In a moment Giovanni Stampa had sprung upon him, wounding him in the throat and breast so that he

¹ Verri, P., *Storia di Milano*, vol. ii., p. 28.

² Decembrio, P. C., *Vita Francisci Sfortiæ*, cap. 37. Muratori, *Rer. Ital. Script.*, xx. 1024.

fell back dead. This murder was the signal for the flight of the terrified Captains and Defenders. Ere morning the insurgents held not only the Court of Arengo but all the gates of the city. They were, in short, masters of the situation.

The next day, 25th February, S. Maria della Scala was the scene of another popular assembly, which met in order to decide on some immediate course of action. Here all the old pretensions with regard to Milan found their expression. The names of France, Savoy, the Pope, the Emperor went from mouth to mouth, and the sole point upon which all agreed was the vituperation of Venice. In the midst of the general confusion, Gaspare da Vimercate rose to make an eloquent appeal in favour of Francesco Sforza. As the defender of Crema no less than as the leader of yesterday's revolt, Gaspare was the hero of the hour, and his championship was in itself enough to influence the populace. Moreover, Sforza's efforts to ingratiate himself with the Milanese had not failed to produce their effect. When he set at liberty a body of the city militia, by himself paying a ransom to those of his troops which had captured them, the men returned to Milan loud in Sforza's praises. In the same way, his care to save the country districts from plunder contrasted favourably with the ravages of the Republican army. Above all, the assembly realised the force of Gaspare's argument, that no other aid would come in time to save Milan. To open the gates to Sforza meant instant relief from the miseries of the siege, and hence the roof of the church rang with the shouts of his name. From the latest evidence on the subject,¹ it appears that the citizens made the first draft of their capitulations with Sforza on the afternoon of the 25th, and that a deputation of six went to Vimercate on the morning of the 26th to lay them before Francesco. He accepted the capitulations as a whole, and, deferring a separate answer to each clause for a future occasion, he at once set out for Milan. Before starting Sforza loaded the troops that accompanied him with as much bread as they could carry. Hence for ten miles out of the city the road was lined with the starving inhabitants

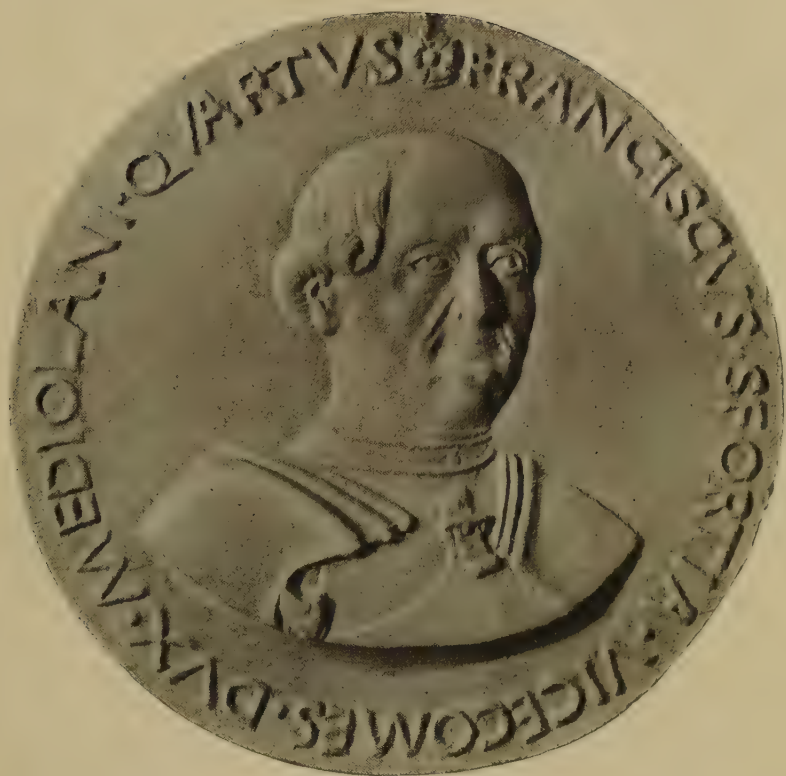
¹ Colombo, A., *L'ingresso di Francesco Sforza in Milano*. Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1905.

who eagerly devoured the food which Sforza's soldiers doled out to them. When Sforza reached the Porta Nuova, he found to his surprise that it was barred against him. Ambrogio Trivulzio and some of the extreme party resented Francesco's treatment of the capitulations, and they now demanded that each clause should be confirmed before Sforza entered Milan. Once more Francesco's path was made smooth by Gaspare da Vimercate, who urged that such haggling over details formed an unworthy welcome to one who came, not as a conqueror, but as the successor of the Visconti Dukes. In the enthusiasm of the moment, Trivulzio's objections were readily waved aside. Sforza rode in at the Porta Nuova amid ovations that befitted a native prince returning to his own. From thence he went straight to the Duomo to render thanks for this triumphant ending of his long struggle. Horse and rider were swept along by the excited multitude, not only to the door of the Cathedral but into the building itself, where, still seated on his horse, Francesco was hailed on all sides as Duke. In the Castello of Milan a tablet is still preserved which came originally from a house overlooking the route between the Porta Nuova and the Duomo, and which bears the following inscription: "*Franciscus Sfortia Vicecomes, dux IIII, et animo invictus et corpore, anno MCCCCL et IIII calendas Martias hora XX domini urbis Mediolani potitus est*".¹ The summit of Francesco Sforza's ambitions had been reached. The peasant *condottiere's* son had become Duke of Milan.

So ended the career of the Ambrosian Republic. According to Machiavelli, its failure was due to the great inequalities of power and rank that existed among the inhabitants of Milan. "In order to create a Republic in Milan," he writes, "it would be necessary to exterminate all the nobility. . . . For there are, among the nobles, so many exalted personages (*tanti straordinari*) that the laws do not suffice to repress them, and they must needs be kept under by a living voice and a royal power."²

¹ "Francesco Sforza Visconti, 4th Duke, unconquerable in mind and in body, became lord of the city of Milan in the year 1450 on the 4th of the Kalends of March (Feb. 26) at the twentieth hour."

² Machiavelli, *Discorso sulla riforma dello stato di Firenze*.



FRANCESCO SFORZA
MEDAL BY SPERANDIO

Yet, although the nobles might be excluded from a trading community such as Florence, in a society so largely feudal as that of Milan no such measure was possible. The Lampugnani, the Trivulzi, the Castiglioni, the Stampa, to quote but a few examples, while they were all ancient land-owning families with agricultural populations depending upon them, were no less the natural leaders of civic life in Milan. The merchants as a class took little interest in politics, and as their wealth was for the most part invested in land, their interests tended to identify themselves with those of the nobles. Below them came the artisans, who asked nothing better than to rule the Duchy on the principles of their democratic gild organisations. Yet it was clear from the later history of the Ambrosian Republic that love of liberty did not, in their case, involve capacity for government. Thus the withdrawal of the ducal authority left the nobles in possession, and it seemed at first as if they would establish an aristocratic Republic on the model of Venice. Their failure was partly caused by natural jealousy on the part of the artisans of those more capable than themselves, but perhaps chiefly by their own factions. Supported by the Guelphs the artisan class succeeded in capturing the organs of government, and in stamping the dealings of the Republic with the hall-marks of ignorance and fanaticism. At the same time they were powerless to prevent any noble who might for the moment possess popular favour from becoming their tyrant. The result was a condition of misrule which could only end in fiasco. With the fall of the Ambrosian Republic Milan declared once and for all in favour of a despotism in that she had proved her utter inability to govern herself.

CHAPTER IV

FRANCESCO SFORZA—DUKE OF MILAN

(1450—1466)

THE accession of Francesco Sforza formed a turning-point not only in the history of Milan but in that of Italy. Within Milan Sforza's recognition as Duke in 1450 marked the final abandonment of Republican ideals and the revival of the earlier despotism. Four years later the chief Italian States gave their consent to Sforza's possession of the Duchy at the Peace of Lodi, and in so doing they determined the basis of their mutual relations for the next forty years. During the first half of the fifteenth century each of the five chief States of Italy had experienced some important change. While Sforza was fighting for the Duchy of Milan, the Aragonese dynasty had replaced that of Anjou in Naples, and Florence had witnessed the rise to power of the Medici. Venice had, meanwhile, become a mainland power, and the return of the Pope to Rome after the schism had emphasised the purely territorial aspect of the Papacy. Hence Italy had been involved in a long series of wars springing from these changes, in the course of which the Five States had marked out their boundaries. Now, in 1454, the days of expansion and conquest were over, and the States evolved the theory of the balance of power as the best way of preserving the peace of Italy. By means of alliances and counter alliances no one State would be allowed to grow strong at the expense of its neighbours. Thus, with the rulers of Italy at peace among themselves, they would be free from foreign intervention, and their resources could be devoted to improvement of their own dominions. The years between Sforza's accession and the Peace of Lodi form the

introduction to the new era. During that period the foreign policy of the House of Sforza was developed in all its essential features, while the position of the new dynasty within the Duchy was determined.

Although his marriage with Bianca Maria Visconti had first fixed Francesco Sforza's eyes upon Milan, it was clear that he owed the ducal throne mainly to his own sword. This, however, was a fact which Francesco would fain ignore. From the moment of his entry he acted as though he were the natural and legitimate successor of Filippo Maria Visconti, whom adverse circumstances had temporarily deprived of his heritage. Nevertheless, Sforza could furnish no documentary evidence in support of his claim to Milan. It is true that a deed of gift existed in favour of Francesco and Bianca, purporting to be drawn up by the late Duke in November, 1446. Yet its claims to authenticity¹ are of the smallest, and even if it were genuine, it would in no sense replace the imperial diploma upon which the Visconti Dukes had based their authority. To make up for this deficiency, Sforza must needs recognise explicitly that he owed his position to popular consent. In spite of Gaspare da Vimercate's intervention, the episode at the Porta Nuova had created a disagreeable impression, which Francesco could not altogether ignore. Hence he remained only a few hours in Milan on that momentous 26th February. Ere nightfall he returned to the camp until a fresh draft of the capitulations had been submitted to him with the "common consent" of the citizens. On 28th February a deputation once more waited upon Sforza at Vimercate and received from him a detailed confirmation of the revised capitulations. Francesco pledged himself to reduce the grist duty and the taxes on corn and wine, to fix the price of salt, to quarter no troops in the city, and to impose no fresh burdens of any kind. The Duke, moreover, must reside in Milan during eight months of the year, and all officials, save the Podestà, must be natives chosen from a list presented to the Duke by the community. All privileges and statutes were

¹ Cf. Giampietro, D., *La Pretesa donazione di Filippo Maria Visconti a Francesco Sforza*. Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1876. Also Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1892, p. 386.

confirmed, the Visconti debts were recognised, and it was solemnly declared that Milan, on Francesco Sforza's death, should pass to no one save to Bianca Maria and her sons. Sforza's claim to rule *coll' autorità del popolo* was further strengthened by what was at least the outward form of a popular election. On 11th March the Vicar and Twelve issued a proclamation to the Ancients of the parishes, bidding them summon one man from each household to the Court of Arengo. The big bell of the Broletto rang out, and the assembly gathered to give their consent to the following measures: the confirmation of the capitulations described above, the investiture of Francesco Sforza by the city of Milan, which claimed to have succeeded to the imperial rights, and the election of various citizens to take part in the elaborate ritual of the coronation. Cries of "*Fiant*" filled the air, and when the advocates of liberty were invited to record their dissent by standing forth from the crowd, "all with one mind remained where they were".¹ Thus did the ancient traditions of liberty become the instrument by which the despotism was imposed upon the ruins of the Republic.

Owing to the delay over the capitulations, and to the time that was spent in preparations for the ceremony, Francesco's coronation did not take place until nearly a month after his first entry into Milan. Meanwhile Sforza had much to occupy him at Vimercate. On the evening of 26th February he arranged for the departure of four heralds, who were to carry his great news to the cities of Italy and to the chief European Courts.² The first went to Pavia, to acquaint Bianca, of her husband's success. From thence he had orders to proceed by way of Montferrat and Savoy to France and England. The second started for the Imperial Court, calling at various places on his route. A third went eastward to Cremona, Mantua and Venice. The fourth was despatched to Ferrara and Bologna,

¹ Formentini, *Ducato di Milano*, Doct. xxv. The preamble to this document is published for the first time by A. Colombo (*op. cit.*, Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1905, Doct. iv.). It gives a detailed account of events in Milan from 25th February until 11th March, which has been followed here.

² Colombo, A., *op. cit.*, Doct. vi.

and from thence to Florence, Siena, Rome and Naples. Among Francesco's first acts was a proclamation, authorising all cities under his rule to send supplies into Milan free of toll. Cremona, Pavia and other towns poured in provisions. Within three days the citizens, who had lately been living upon dogs and rats, lacked nothing. Anxious not to identify his rule with a party, Francesco treated his political foes with exceptional moderation. Ossona and Appiano were imprisoned, and other prominent supporters of the Republic were relegated to Pavia, or to their country estates. Yet their punishment was of the shortest duration. Erasmo Trivulzio was released from prison in time to be knighted at the coronation, on which occasion many of Sforza's most active opponents were restored to favour. On Sunday, 22nd March,¹ all was ready, and Francesco rode to the Porta Ticinese, accompanied by his wife, his brother Alessandro and his six-year-old son Galeazzo Maria. Here the chief citizens were gathered in order to escort the new Duke to the Duomo, beneath a magnificent white *baldacchino*, embroidered with gold. Francesco, however, declined this honour, saying that such outward marks of dignity were the superstitions of kings. Riding at the side of the *baldacchino*, Francesco made his way to the Piazza del Duomo, where a platform had been erected facing the Cathedral. The ceremony opened with an oration by Guarnerio Castiglione, a former minister of the Visconti. Then, clad in the white coronation robes of his predecessors, Sforza was solemnly proclaimed Duke of Milan. Seven of the leading citizens invested him with the ducal insignia. Gaspare da Vimercate bore the sceptre, Antonio Trivulzio the standard, Pietro Pusterla the sword. A Visconti, a Borromeo, a Lampugnano and a Marliano presented respectively the cap, the collar, the cloak and the seal. Two representatives from each of the six gates tendered the keys of the city. Twelve more swore fealty, and the Piazza rang with shouts of "*Viva il Duca*". Francesco's first act as Duke was to create his eldest son Count of Pavia, and Gaspare da Vimercate Count of Valenza. Before leaving the platform the Duke made a number of new knights, and

¹ *Op. cit.*, Doct. vii. Simonetta says 25th March.

listened to a second oration from Castiglione. Finally, the whole assembly moved into the Duomo, where a solemn *Te Deum* closed the events of the day.

Francesco's efforts to court popularity combined with the natural reaction against republicanism to produce general enthusiasm in his favour. Prince and people alike made it their chief object to restore everything "as it was in the time of the deceased Duke". Thus the revival of those special attributes of the ducal constitution, the Secret Council and the Council of Justice, was tacitly assumed in the capitulations by the demand that they should not be removed from Milan. Even before he was established on the throne, Francesco drew up a list of ten persons who should sit in the Secret Council at the pleasure of the Duke (*ad beneplacitum*), while four others were appointed to the Council of Justice. More than this, the Duke soon approached the citizens with a view to procuring from them a petition for the re-building of the Castello. It was not, Francesco said, that he doubted the loyalty of his subjects, but that the fortress might be an ornament to the city, and a security against external enemies. In vain did the lawyer, Giorgio Piatti, remind the people that Francesco was not immortal, and that the Castello might, in the future, place them at the mercy of a cruel tyrant. In vain did he plead that princes should find their strongest fortresses in the love of their subjects. The people were carried away by the impulse of the moment, and by July the work was already in progress. Thus originated the Castello Sforzesco which became, indeed, an ornament to the city, but which, far from being a security against foreign attack, was to prove on more than one occasion an effective weapon in the hands of the enemies of the Sforza dynasty.¹

On the news that Milan had opened her gates to Sforza, the few cities which still remained loyal to the Ambrosian Republic at once recognised him as their lord, while the Venetians retired across the Adda, breaking the bridge which had served as their connection with the Milanese. It was obvious, how-

¹ Cf. Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, cap. 20: "*Alla casa Sforzesca ha fatto e farà più guerra, il Castello di Milano che alcun altro disordine di quello Stato*".

ever, that Venice would not thus easily acquiesce in Francesco's possession of the Duchy, and that in renewing hostilities she could reckon upon the support of others who saw in the accession of Francesco Sforza the shattering of personal ambitions with regard to the Milanese State. Early in 1451 a league was formed between Venice, Naples, Savoy and Montferrat which was in itself tantamount to a declaration of war. Against this formidable alliance Francesco could only set the friendship of Genoa and Mantua, two weak States which themselves needed protection, the one against the aggressions of Alfonso of Aragon, the other against Venice. Hence the fate of the Duchy depended largely upon the attitude of Florence. So far as Cosimo dei Medici was concerned there was no uncertainty. Not only was he bound to Francesco Sforza by a friendship of fifteen years' standing, but he knew that a strong ruler in Milan could alone prevent the Venetian Republic from becoming the mistress of Lombardy. With the passes of the Alps and the Via Æmilia under the control of Venice, Florentine merchants would be practically cut off from the rest of Europe, and their trade would be ruined. Hence Cosimo furnished Sforza with pecuniary aid throughout the struggle for Milan, and would fain continue to support him upon the throne. Florence, however, was not easily reconciled to a departure from the traditional policy of an alliance with Venice, nor did a Republic, jealous for her own liberties, approve of aiding a powerful soldier to crush the liberties of a sister city. Thus the Republic would have preferred to remain neutral in the approaching struggle if the Venetians had not thrown her into the arms of Sforza by driving all Florentine merchants from their territories. Venice had hoped by this to force Florence into active alliance against Milan, but the result of her action proved the reverse of what she had anticipated. From henceforth the Florentine-Milanese alliance became the mainstay of Francesco Sforza's power and the most characteristic feature of his foreign policy.

In any war with Alfonso of Aragon the idea of enlisting the sympathies of Anjou could not fail to arise. Already in 1447 René of Anjou had consulted Sforza as to the advisability of an attack on Naples. Now, Cosimo dei Medici pleaded

for an active alliance, not only with René but with the French King. Charles VII. was eager to embark upon an aggressive policy in Italy. Therefore, urged Cosimo's envoy, to ally with him for the restoration of Anjou to Naples would be the best means of preventing a league between Alfonso and France in support of the Orleanist claims to Milan. Francesco, however, hesitated to bring the French into Italy. The Florentine ambassador found him much averse to the French alliance, and he was only convinced of its necessity by the accumulation of forces, both external and internal, which threatened his position in the Duchy. Of Alfonso's bitter hostility Francesco was warned by Cosimo dei Medici himself, who wrote that the King of Aragon spoke freely of his hatred towards Sforza. Meanwhile the Guelphs of the Duchy, encouraged by the assurances of Venice that she would spare no pains "to preserve the liberty of the people of Milan,"¹ spent their days in hatching fresh plots against the Government. More serious still was the coming of the Emperor Frederick III. to Italy in close alliance with Naples and Venice. Angry at the disregard of imperial rights involved in Francesco's accession, Frederick refused to visit Milan, and, contrary to all precedent, he received the crown of Lombardy from the hands of the Pope. Faced by such a coalition, Francesco could not but come to terms with Charles VII., who, for his part, welcomed an alliance which would benefit the loyal House of Anjou rather than Orleans, the ally of Burgundy. In February, 1452, a treaty was signed between France, Milan and Florence, by which Charles promised to send a Prince of the Blood to aid Sforza in return for assistance against the House of Aragon in Naples. It seemed as though the events of 1494 would be anticipated by forty years.

In April, 1452, war began. The Duke of Milan solemnly unfurled his banners outside the Porta Romana to embark upon a final campaign with Venice upon the familiar battlefield between the Adda and the Mincio. The conflict, which was prolonged during the next two years, is singularly lacking in military interest. Its real importance lies in the distrust

¹ Rossi, L., *Lega tra il Duca di Milano i Fiorentini e Carlo VII., Re di Francia*. Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1906.

of French aid which was gradually implanted in Francesco's mind. In May, 1453, René of Anjou set out for Italy, while the Dauphin Louis appeared with a considerable force in Piedmont. Owing to the growing hostility between Charles VII. and his heir, the Dauphin's presence proved highly disturbing. He threatened Genoa, thereby depriving René of aid which would have facilitated his descent into Italy. He asserted vague claims to Milan based upon his descent from the Cis-Alpine Gauls. Finally he returned home, having negotiated with all Sforza's enemies in turn, and having also expressed his willingness to marry his daughter to one of Francesco's sons. Meanwhile René of Anjou made but slow progress. He did not reach Pavia until the middle of September, and another fortnight had elapsed before he could be induced to set out for Sforza's camp. Bianca Maria exerted herself to do honour to her husband's ally, yet her letters reveal the extent to which her patience was tried.¹ René got up late in the morning; his troops were undisciplined; the French, in short, cared for nothing but for feasts and entertainments, especially when they could get them at the expense of others. When at last René joined the Duke of Milan, the violence of the French soldiers and the scant authority possessed by their leader made Francesco anxious to use them as little as possible. Matters reached a climax at the sack of Pontevico, when Sforza's troops turned on the French, in order to prevent the wholesale massacre of the inhabitants. The inevitable result was an increasing coldness between Sforza and Anjou. René began to complain that he was not sufficiently trusted, and that he was kept in a subordinate position. At the same time supplies from Florence began to fall off, and, in December, René announced his intention of returning home. He went nominally with the idea of returning in the spring fortified by fresh supplies. Nevertheless, he crossed the Alps, vowing in his heart that he would not set foot in Italy again.

Meanwhile the news of the fall of Constantinople had turned

¹ Colombo, Prof. Ella, *Il Re Renato alleato del Duca Francesco Sforza contra i Veneziani*. Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1894.

all thoughts towards the East, and even before René's departure the current had set in the direction of peace. Nicholas V. exerted himself to end the war in order that the combatants might unite in a crusade against the Turk. In October, 1453, he summoned the Italian powers to a congress at Rome, threatening general excommunication if peace were not made. Two ambassadors from Milan attended the congress, yet their attitude was far from conciliatory. The terror inspired by the French troops had materially contributed to Francesco's success, and the Venetians held little west of the Mincio, save the three towns of Crema, Brescia and Bergamo. Hence the Duke of Milan could adopt a lofty attitude, saying that Venice had begun the war and had been worsted, therefore it was for her to sue for terms. Some months had been spent in fruitless negotiations when Italy was startled by the news that a separate peace had been concluded between the two chief belligerents at Lodi (9th April, 1454). In spite of their would-be obstinacy both Milan and Venice were in urgent need of peace. The successes of the Turk called the Venetians to the defence of their eastern dominions; Francesco Sforza had received repeated warnings from Florence that supplies from this quarter must soon cease. Hence the Duke of Milan consented to yield his claims to Brescia, Bergamo and Crema, while Venice renounced that dearest object of her ambitions, the city of Cremona. The Ghiarad'adda was restored to Milan, and Francesco could congratulate himself upon this tangible result of the two years' campaign. Venice, however, save for the possession of Crema, was in no better position than she had been on the death of Filippo Maria Visconti. Such was the genius and perseverance of Francesco Sforza that she, who had hoped to rule Lombardy, gained one town after seven years of fighting. The Peace of Lodi forms, indeed, a fitting close to the military career which began so brilliantly beneath the walls of Aquila. Francesco bade his final farewell to the camp and the sword, with the promises of his youth triumphantly fulfilled.

Room had been left for the inclusion of the allies of both parties in the Peace of Lodi, and before the end of the year all

the Italian States except Naples had agreed to its terms. To the Duke of Milan the inclusion of Naples was both more difficult and more necessary than that of any other State. Francesco's great object was to secure for Italy a sufficient measure of unity to check the aggressive policy of Charles VII. Without Alfonso, who was most directly threatened by French claims, this would be impossible. Yet by agreeing to the Peace of Lodi, Alfonso must not only renounce his pretensions to Milan, but must ally with the House of Sforza, the traditional supporter of the Angevin in Naples. In view of their past enmity, the alliance formed a revolution in policy both to Alfonso and Francesco. Nevertheless, both, in time, yielded to the pressure of its advantages. The recent campaign had shown Sforza that the Angevin claims to Naples were closely connected with those of Orleans to Milan, and that to encourage the one was a sure way of bringing the other into prominence. It had also taught Alfonso that by pressing his claims to Milan he would drive Sforza into the arms of France. Hence, in January, 1455, a league for twenty-five years was formed between Milan, Naples and Florence. The dual alliance became triple, and upon the friendly relations existing between these three powers rested the peace of Italy for many years to come.

Francesco Sforza's admission into the circle of Italian princes was marked by a series of marriage alliances. As early as 1450 it had been agreed that Galeazzo Maria Sforza should marry a daughter of the Marquis of Mantua. Then, on the inclusion of Savoy in the Peace of Lodi, the Duke of Milan's second son, Filippo, was betrothed to Maria of Savoy. Finally, the Neapolitan alliance formed the occasion for a double betrothal between the Houses of Aragon and Sforza. The Duke of Milan promised the hand of his daughter Ippolita to young Alfonso, the grandson of the present King, while Leonora of Aragon was betrothed to Sforza Maria, Francesco's third son. Of all these alliances only one was destined to be fulfilled. Nevertheless, the mere fact of their conclusion formed a recognition of the new dynasty which greatly increased its stability. Although no betrothals could cement

the friendship between Milan and the two Republics, the occasion was marked by a curious interchange of palaces. In 1447 the house which Francesco occupied in Venice during his *condottiere* days was confiscated by the Republic. He now received in its stead a house near the Church of S. Polo which he exchanged a few years later for a palace on the Grand Canal, known to-day as the "Ca' Duca".¹ At the same time Francesco presented Cosimo dei Medici with a house in Milan as a recognition of all that he owed to his friendship. This was the famous Medici Bank which for the next thirty years played a prominent part in the artistic history of Milan. In 1484, however, Lorenzo dei Medici's financial difficulties forced him to sell the house for four thousand ducats, a transaction which he performed "with tears in his eyes".²

The Duke of Milan was particularly anxious that the formation of the Triple Alliance should involve no open breach between Milan and the French King. Fearing that Charles VII. might be offended at the failure of René's expedition, Francesco urged upon Cosimo dei Medici the necessity of some propitiatory measure. Thereupon a letter was despatched to Charles praising the "valour, prudence and diligence" of his cousin, and expressing eternal gratitude for the loan of his services.³ Francesco also took pains to excuse his alliance with Naples to Charles VII., on the ground that it was necessary for the preservation of his dominions. Thanks to this diplomacy, the Duke of Milan flattered himself that an excellent understanding existed between himself, the French King and the Duke of Orleans. "We know ourselves to be loved by His Majesty as if we were his sons," wrote Francesco in April, 1456, "while we hold him in such honour and reverence as if he were our father and lord."⁴ Nevertheless, the maintenance of these friendly relations became increasingly difficult owing to the continued attacks of Alfonso of Aragon upon Genoa.

¹ Cf. Beltrami, L., *La Ca del Duca ed altre reminiscenze Sforzesche in Venezia*. Milan, 1900.

² Guicciardini, F., *Storia Fiorentina*. Op. ined., vol. iii., p. 88.

³ Colombo, Prof. Ella, *op. cit.*

⁴ Morbio, C., *Codice Visconteo-Sforzesco*, 1390-1497.



Alinari

DOORWAY OF THE MEDICI BANK

Castello Sforzesco, Milan

Weary of being besieged by the King of Naples in the interests of the Adorni, the rival faction of Fregosi offered Genoa to Charles VII. Francesco Sforza had warned Alfonso that René's son, John of Calabria, was working to that end, and he now sent four embassies to France in the hope of impeding the negotiations. Despite his efforts John of Calabria became Lieutenant-General of Genoa for Charles VII. in February, 1458. Four months later the pressure on Genoa relaxed with the death of Alfonso. The reason for the French Protectorate had gone, but John of Calabria remained to stir up all those claims on Italy which Francesco Sforza would fain have lulled to rest.

The death of Alfonso of Aragon in June, 1458, produced fresh complications in the field of Italian politics. While his hereditary dominions passed to his brother, the Kingdom of Naples was left to his illegitimate son, Ferrante, whose succession was opposed by John of Calabria and the majority of the Neapolitan baronage. Cosimo dei Medici, true to the traditional Florentine policy of friendship with France, counselled the Duke of Milan to renounce the Neapolitan alliance and to make himself "the leader and guide of the French in Italy". "Cosimo is sorry," wrote Nicodemo da Pontremoli to Francesco Sforza, "that Madonna Ippolita should fall into the hands of the Catalans, and especially into those of him to whom she is betrothed. . . . Even though the Duke of Calabria is nearly thirty, he seems to him a kind gentleman and a man of worth, who would be much more suitable in every respect to the aforesaid Madonna, especially as women grow old far more quickly than men."¹ John of Calabria realising the influence which the Duke of Milan possessed in Genoa was eager for the match, but Francesco would not be deterred from his chosen path. He resolved to abide by the Triple Alliance even though it should force him into conflict with France. Together with the newly elected Pope Pius II., Francesco threw himself upon the side of Ferrante, whose final triumph was due in large measure to their unwavering support. Francesco's influence, although it could not place Florence actively on the side of Aragon, was

¹ Sorbelli, A., *Francesco Sforza a Genou*, 1458-66. Doct. i. Bologna, 1901.

at least sufficient to prevent the Republic from aiding Anjou. Moreover, Sforza rendered active assistance to Ferrante by sending his brother Alessandro to share in the Neapolitan campaign. Yet his chief sphere of opposition to the Angevin was necessarily Genoa. In 1459 a Milanese force aided Archbishop Fregoso in an attack upon John of Calabria which aimed at crushing him before he could reach Naples. The result was a victory for the Duke, who left for Naples without further delay. His departure proved fatal to the French cause in Genoa. Adorni and Fregosi combined, during his absence, in a popular rising which drove the French governor into the Castelletto and placed the city in the hands of the insurgents. If the intrigues of Francesco Sforza had helped to procure this rebellion, his efforts undoubtedly secured its success. He did his utmost to keep the peace between the rival factions. He lent money and artillery to carry on the siege of the Castelletto. Finally, when in July, 1461, René of Anjou made a desperate attempt to relieve the French garrison, it was the arrival of reinforcements from Milan which ensured the victory of the Genoese. René was forced to retire to Savona, complaining bitterly of the Duke of Milan, whom he held to be primarily responsible for his defeat.

Francesco's opposition to the Angevin in Genoa could not fail to incur the displeasure of Charles VII. The evil effects of his hostility were, however, neutralised by the friendly attitude of the Dauphin, whom opposition to his father and hatred of his Angevin cousins rendered the champion of the Triple Alliance. In 1454 Louis had been active in promoting the peace between Milan and Savoy. On the outbreak of the Neapolitan war, he went so far as to propose a league between himself, the Duke of Burgundy, Ferrante of Naples and Francesco Sforza.¹ This singular combination was never actually formed, but, in December, 1460, the Dauphin concluded a treaty with the Duke of Milan, by which he recognised Sforza's claims to the Duchy at the expense of those of Orleans, while both parties promised mutual assistance against

¹ For the relations between Louis and Sforza at this period, *cf.* Sorbelli, *op. cit.*

all enemies. It was expressly stipulated that this treaty should remain in force when Louis succeeded his father upon the throne. Nevertheless, Charles VII.'s death in July, 1461, caused a temporary breach between Francesco and the new monarch. Louis XI., to abide by his treaty with Milan, must alienate the Houses of Orleans and Anjou from the French crown, while he must forego the prospect of recovering Genoa. These sacrifices he was not at first prepared to make, and the terms which he proposed to the Duke of Milan demanded a wholesale recognition of the French claims on Italy. Francesco must compensate Orleans with territory or money, he must renounce his alliance with Ferrante, and must aid in reducing Genoa to obedience. For Francesco the situation was difficult in the extreme. It seemed as though he must choose between abject submission and renewed hostility to the King of France without the existence of a Dauphin to equalise the struggle. By careful diplomacy he contrived to do neither one thing nor the other. After two years of negotiation Louis XI. decided that alliance with the Duke of Milan suited his purpose better than an aggressive policy in Italy. Since the defeat of John of Calabria by Ferrante and Alessandro Sforza at Troya in August, 1462, the cause of Anjou in Naples had become practically hopeless. Moreover, Genoa, even should it be recovered for France, would prove a drain on her resources which did not commend itself to Louis XI.'s parsimony. Hence in December, 1463, he agreed to invest Francesco with the fiefs of Genoa and Savona, and to renew their former alliance. Savona was promptly handed over, while Louis XI. called upon his Italian allies to aid in placing his chosen representative, the Duke of Milan, in possession of Genoa.

Before Francesco could enjoy the fruits of his new acquisition he must needs enforce his authority upon those very citizens whom he had aided to throw off the yoke of the foreigner. Of these the chief was Archbishop Fregoso, who, by process of driving out all rival candidates, had himself taken possession of the Dogeship, and saw no reason to yield it. Fortunately for the Duke of Milan, Genoa soon grew tired of the Archbishop's despotic rule. Savona became the head-

quarters of a rapidly increasing band of exiles from Genoa, while within the city cries in favour of Sforza began to arise. At length in March, 1464, the Archbishop resolved to depart. Having fitted out four vessels with men and provisions he exchanged the career of Doge for that of pirate, thus enabling Gaspare da Vimercate to occupy Genoa with slight resistance. Twenty-four citizens, drawn from among both nobles and people, went to Milan to swear fealty to Francesco, and to tender him the keys of Genoa. With the capitulation of the Castelletto in June Francesco's triumph was complete. Yet another part of the Visconti dominions had passed to the House of Sforza. Before the end of the year Archbishop Fregoso abandoned the high seas and made his peace with the Duke of Milan. Genoa, meanwhile, settled down to a period of unwonted peace and prosperity under the wise government of her new lord.

This same year, 1464, saw the termination of the struggle in Naples. Defeated both by land and sea, René of Anjou and his son set sail for France, leaving Ferrante in undisputed possession of the kingdom. Ferrante was fully sensible of the debt which he owed to the Duke of Milan, and he hastened to express his gratitude in a tangible form by investing his son, Sforza Maria, with the Duchy of Bari. Strangely enough this Neapolitan fief was to remain in the hands of the House of Sforza longer than any part of their Lombard dominions. Twenty years after the death of the last Sforza Duke of Milan, Bona Sforza, Dowager-Queen of Poland, and the sole representative of her race, returned to end her days upon her hereditary estates at Bari.

Francesco was now at the zenith of his power and prosperity. Nevertheless, his triumphs had been won at the cost of certain blemishes upon his reputation. His control over the Duchy was completed at the expense of two among the captains who had aided his rise. His alliance with Louis XI. involved the repudiation of the marriage contract between his son and Dorotea Gonzaga. His championship of Ferrante of Naples laid him open to the charge of complicity in the murder of Piccinino. In 1450 Carlo Gonzaga joined Guglielmo of

Montferrat in his prison at Pavia on a charge of conspiring with Venice against Sforza. Carlo was furious at Francesco's alliance with his brother and rival the Marquis of Mantua, and there is no reason to suppose that either he or Guglielmo was unjustly accused. Francesco, however, seized the opportunity to recover Alessandria and Tortona for himself. To make his prisoners purchase their liberty by renouncing the reward of their past services was a piece of sharp practice which gave colour to the opinion that the whole episode was planned by Francesco for the express purpose of recovering the two cities. Yet the worst that can be proved against Francesco is that he failed to be generous, a fault that sinks into insignificance beside the sordid details of the Gonzaga marriage negotiations. The betrothal of Galeazzo Maria Sforza to Dorotea Gonzaga had been a matter of policy, and policy dictated the non-fulfilment of the bond. It is only distinguished from a hundred other such cases by the brutal fashion in which a helpless girl was sacrificed to reasons of State. Galeazzo Maria was originally betrothed to Susanna, the eldest daughter of the Marquis of Mantua, but in 1457 Gonzaga informed the Milanese ambassador that the girl had developed a deformed spine, and offered to substitute Dorotea in her stead. The offer was accepted, and from henceforth Galeazzo was constantly in Dorotea's society. When, however, Louis XI. expressed his desire that the future Duke of Milan should marry Bona of Savoy, the French King's sister-in-law, Francesco resolved to break off the Mantuan engagement. Acting upon a report that Dorotea was deformed in the same way as her sister, doctors were sent from Milan in order to examine her. It is probable that Dorotea had inherited something of the deformity common in her family, yet the arrival of the Milanese doctors at a time when rumours of the Savoyard marriage had already reached Mantua, left little room for doubt as to the true reason which prompted the investigation. Gonzaga flatly refused to allow his daughter to be examined, and it seemed as if the whole scheme were at an end. The re-opening of negotiations was chiefly due to the Duchess Bianca, who did everything in her power to further the match. Yet neither

Francesco nor Galeazzo could be weaned from the French alliance, and Bianca's efforts only prolonged the affair until 1467, when Dorotea's death of fever freed Galeazzo from his ill-fated bride.¹

More serious is Francesco's alleged share in the murder of Piccinino. Yet the charge agrees so little with the general conception of his character as to be on the face of it open to question. The facts of the case are well known. Jacopo Piccinino had fought on the side of Anjou throughout the Neapolitan campaign, but on its conclusion he made his peace with Ferrante, through the mediation of Alessandro Sforza. Piccinino then went to Milan and was married to Francesco's illegitimate daughter, Drusiana, to whom he had long been betrothed. In the spring of 1465 he returned to Naples, accompanied by a Milanese escort, and apparently in high favour with both King and Duke. Ferrante's favour proved, however, to be but a trap to lure him to his fate. Soon after his arrival Piccinino was imprisoned in the Castel Nuovo and in a month's time he had ceased to live. There is no doubt that he was foully murdered, yet it is almost equally certain that the Duke of Milan did not share Ferrante's guilt. Francesco had suffered much from Piccinino's treachery in former years, and the cries of "Braccio" which his presence in Milan evoked could not have been pleasing to a Sforza. Nevertheless, the attempt to magnify Francesco's obvious desire for Piccinino's departure into a deep-laid plot against his rival's life, commits the Duke to methods altogether too cumbersome and elaborate to be convincing. If Francesco had really desired Piccinino's death he would hardly have allowed him to travel the length of Italy before achieving his purpose. At the same time, if Francesco is assumed to be guilty his letters of protest against Piccinino's imprisonment, his promises to Drusiana that every effort should be made for her husband's release, and the excuses which his complaints called forth from Ferrante carry the art of dissimulation to heights unknown even in fifteenth-century Italy. It is far simpler to accept Francesco's indignation as genuine, and to conclude that the man who, during the struggle in the March

¹ Cf. Davari, S., *Il Matrimonio di Dorotea Gonzaga*. Genoa, 1890,

of Ancona, had refused to allow the elder Piccinino to be removed from his path by foul means, had not so far forgotten the *condottiere* code of honour as to become a party to the murder of his son. When the direful news reached Milan Ippolita Sforza was already on her way to Naples as the bride of Alfonso. Francesco immediately ordered the bridal party to remain at Siena, and it seemed doubtful whether the marriage would take place. Yet the Neapolitan alliance was precious, and after two months Ippolita was allowed to proceed. As nothing could restore Piccinino to life, it was a pity to quarrel with a hard-won ally. Such was the Duke of Milan's view of the matter, a view which, in its cold-blooded common-sense, is as characteristic of Francesco's nature as a long premeditated act of treachery and vengeance is foreign to it.¹

During the last year of Francesco's reign an opportunity arose for him to prove the value of his friendship to Louis XI. As he had aided Ferrante against the Neapolitan baronage, so now he supported Louis XI. against the Princes of the Blood banded together in the League of Public Weal. In April, 1465, the Duke of Milan offered to send Galeazzo Maria to France at the head of some 4,000 horse and 1,000 foot, to be employed by Louis XI. as he thought fit.² Louis accepted with effusion, and asked that the Italians might be sent to Dauphiné and Lyonnais to defend those provinces against the Burgundians. Francesco's chief difficulty was to raise the necessary funds. Although the expedition won the approval of the other members of the Triple Alliance, they were not prepared to finance it. Hence it was not until the beginning of August that Galeazzo set out for France accompanied by Gaspare da Vimercate, with whom rested the real responsibility

¹ Francesco himself anticipated the charges brought against him. See his letters to the Milanese ambassadors in Naples. "This news has filled us with the greatest possible grief, anger and bitterness . . . for we recognise the great trouble and infamy which will follow from it both to the King and ourselves. . . . No one will be persuaded that what His Majesty has done against Piccinino, was not done with our participation or with our consent and favour."—Portioli, A., *La morte di Jacopo Piccinino*. Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1878. Cf. also Canetta, C. Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1882.

² Cf. Ghinzoni, P., *Spedizione Sforzesca in Francia*. Milano, 1890.

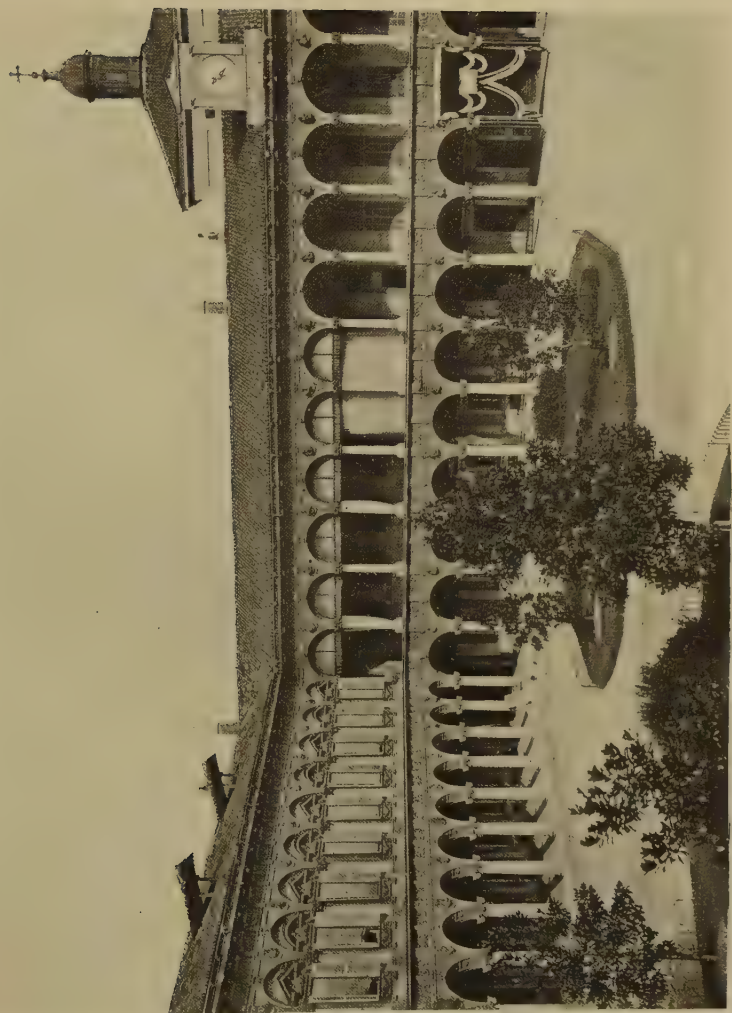
for the expedition. The nature of the task entrusted to them and the absence of cannon prevented the Italians from achieving any notable success. Nevertheless, their presence kept the two provinces loyal, while they created a diversion from the war in Normandy by forcing Bourbon and Burgundy to look to the defence of their own dominions. After several successful raids upon Bourbon territory, proceedings were stayed by a general truce terminating in the Treaty of Conflans. Profiting by Francesco's advice, Louis XI. had changed the public weal into the individual weal by means of separate negotiations with the rebel princes. The war was virtually at an end, and a French embassy started for Italy to thank the Duke of Milan for the services which he had rendered. Meanwhile Galeazzo Maria retired to winter quarters at Vienne. Negotiations for his marriage with Bona of Savoy were in progress, and he hoped in the spring to visit his future bride at the Court of France. When the spring came Galeazzo had no time to spend upon love-making. On 8th March Francesco Sforza breathed his last, and his son must needs hurry across the Alps to make good his claim to the Duchy of Milan.

Although Francesco claimed a popular basis for his rule in Milan, his internal government was essentially monarchical in character. In the capitulations of 1450 two clauses at least breathe the spirit of the territorial prince, who aimed at bringing every inhabitant of the State beneath his immediate control. There should be no private jurisdictions or exemptions in the Duchy save that of the *Fabbrica del Duomo*. Secondly, no subject might accept titles or privileges, whether from Pope or Emperor, without the consent of the Duke. It was possible that the Duke might find a serious rival to his authority in Milan in the person of the Archbishop. Hence when the See became vacant in 1454 Francesco contrived that his brother Gabriele should be appointed, an arrangement which prevented all friction between the ecclesiastical and the secular power. From the frequent appointment of friends and relations of the House of Sforza to the chief Sees of the Duchy, it is evident that the papal choice could be moulded according to the will of the reigning prince. Among the most characteristic de-

velopments of Francesco's government was the importance of his secretary, Cecco Simonetta, upon whom devolved more and more of the actual business of State. Simonetta was especially active in the sphere of foreign politics, where he drafted despatches, issued instructions to ambassadors, and received the written reports of their mission. The Milanese nobles soon looked askance at the employment of this low-born stranger, so much so that Gaspare da Vimercate ventured to plead with the Duke for his dismissal. "If I lose him I must have another Cecco in his place, even if I have to make him out of wax," was Francesco's oft-quoted reply. Francesco Sforza's rule forms a typical example of the Italian despotism at its best. It was a despotism in that it regarded the people merely as a useful instrument in the hands of the Duke; it was beneficent in that it aimed consistently at furthering the prosperity of the Duchy and the welfare of its inhabitants. Among the most valuable of Francesco's undertakings were his efforts to improve the waterways of the Duchy. As Filippo Maria Visconti brought Milan into connection with the Ticino, so now Francesco brought the waters of the Adda to the capital by means of the Martesana Canal. The work necessitated elaborate engineering, which was well repaid by the advantages gained from the canal both by Milan and the country through which it flowed. In view of Francesco's constant lack of money, it is all the more to his credit that he abolished such doubtful means of raising money as the sale of offices and the system of lotteries. Thanks to the first of these reforms, Francesco was able to exercise some discretion in the choice of his subordinates, and in Pavia his reign was noted for the good men he sent thither as Podestà. Above all, Francesco earned the gratitude of his subjects as the founder of the great hospital in Milan. The scheme was carried out under the auspices of Pius II., who placed the hospital under the control of a body of directors appointed by the Archbishop, the Duke and his heirs being made perpetual patrons. As soon as the papal diploma had been obtained, the Duke and Duchess of Milan laid the foundation-stone upon the site of a Visconti palace which they had yielded for the purpose. The

hospital was open to all nationalities and all religions, and it absorbed into itself the hospitals already existing in the diocese of Milan. As time went on other benefactors arose to enlarge and improve it, but even in Francesco's reign it was held to be "so well built and arranged that it had not its equal in Europe". Standing as it does to-day in the Via Francesco Sforza, the hospital has proved the most abiding witness to the era of the House of Sforza, with the exception of the Castello, almost the sole survival of their rule in Milan.

"This Prince was most dear and acceptable to both nobles and people." Such is Cagnola's opinion with regard to Francesco Sforza, and his verdict is substantiated by contemporary and modern historians alike. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that almost all contemporaries who saw the Duchy of Milan from the inside were adherents of the House of Sforza. Moreover, in so far as the chroniclers of the day were unbiassed, they probably judged chiefly from what they saw in Milan itself. Hence they make no mention of the very real discontent which existed in many of the subject-towns and which, at one moment, seemed likely to show itself in open rebellion. In 1461 Francesco became seriously ill. Reports of his death spread throughout the Duchy causing general agitation and bringing into prominence all elements of disturbance within his dominions. At Piacenza the news proved the signal for a rising, which was only crushed at the cost of considerable bloodshed. The effect of this rebellion was to make Francesco institute a careful inquiry with a view to discovering both the principal conspirators and also the general state of feeling in the Duchy. The information thus obtained showed Sforza's captain, Tiberto Brandolini, to be the prime mover in the agitation. Convicted of intriguing with Borso d'Este and with John of Calabria for the possession of Piacenza, or some other town in the Duchy, he was promptly executed. Other conspirators, including one of Francesco's illegitimate sons, were imprisoned, and the whole movement fizzled out. It is now chiefly important for the report on the political condition of the Duchy, tendered to Francesco by Antonio Vailati on the



Boggi

OSPEDALE MAGGIORE, MILAN

conclusion of his inquiry.¹ Vailati visited all the chief towns under Sforza's rule, gleaning information not only from the local officials but from innkeepers, doctors, peasants, from any one, in fact, with whom he had an opportunity to converse. He found much that was highly unfavourable to the existing Government. Factions were everywhere rife, and in many places the Guelphs were far more powerful than the Ghibellines. Whether they looked to Venice, as in the towns east of Milan such as Lodi and Casalmaggiore, or to France, as on the western frontiers of the Duchy, the Guelphs were invariably opposed to Sforza. On the other hand, the Ghibellines in Tortona and its neighbourhood divided their allegiance between Sforza and the Marquis of Montferrat. Local lords who would profit by the dismemberment of the Duchy fostered sedition in the towns within their sphere of influence. Thus Parma and its district were agitated by the intrigues of Manfreda da Correggio, and Vailati considered that no city was more likely to cause disturbance. Of the neighbouring Castelnovo, he wrote: "There is no one in this place who wishes to remain under Your Highness's rule". On the rumour of Francesco's death, Niccolò Pallavicino came to Borgo San Donino, announcing that he wished to furnish his house. He did his best to corrupt both Podestà and Castellan, while by means of lavish hospitality he obtained a considerable following in the town, "such as will aid him to do every evil". Even where the local lords adhered to Sforza, he sometimes suffered from their unpopularity, as, for instance, in Pellegrino, where the opposition of the citizens was directed mainly against Pietro Maria Rossi's control of the fortress. In Tortona the news of Francesco's critical condition rendered the Guelphs "as gay as if they were dressed for a feast". When French troops passed through the town to the relief of the Castelletto at Genoa, they were greeted with delight, and the citizens confidently expected a French occupation. "We conclude that there is nothing to build upon, because there is no love." Such was Vailati's

¹ Cf. Ghinzoni, P., *Informazioni politiche sul Ducato di Milano*, 1461. Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1892.

verdict upon the city, and it could be applied with equal truth to the majority of places which he visited. Of Cremona, however, the report was far more satisfactory. The news of Francesco's death gained little credence, from the fact that it was not confirmed by those citizens who had posts at the Court and who saw the Duke every day. Most people professed themselves well content with the existing Government, saying that they had never seen Cremona more beautiful and prosperous. There was considerable discontent at the pressure of taxation, but if this could be lightened "Sforza would be the best loved and the most desired lord in the world". Vailati makes no mention of either Milan or Pavia, yet it is clear from other evidence that they shared the opinion of Cremona. The reason is not hard to discover. For more than ten years now Francesco had made his home in Milan, and the citizens had come to regard him with pride and affection. The same may be said of Pavia, which had opened her gates to Francesco at the first opportunity, and which had since been a favourite ducal residence. Cremona, too, as the dowry town of Bianca Maria and the scene of her wedding, was marked out for special attention. Thus all three towns were bound by close personal ties to the House of Sforza. They knew Francesco, his wife and his children as friends, whereas such places as Piacenza, or the comparatively lately conquered district of the Oglio, knew him only as a conqueror. In Italy the personal bond was all-important, and where it was lacking loyalty was the exception rather than the rule. It is probable that the taxation complained of in Cremona was a real burden to many of Francesco's subjects. At the beginning of the reign the country was still exhausted by the long war, and as the taxes were mainly raised upon food they fell heavily upon the lower classes. Moreover, the support of a new dynasty necessitated the maintenance of an army out of proportion to the size and revenues of the Duchy. On the other hand, the good order which Francesco enforced throughout his dominions greatly increased their prosperity. Vailati learned that the peasants could now put money in their pockets by breeding pigs and poultry, whereas during the Visconti era all these things had been taken from them by

force. Such was the decrease in robbery that a man could travel in safety through the country with gold in his hand. As in the camp so in the Duchy, Francesco aimed at maintaining strict discipline and impartial justice. The measure of success which he achieved must be reckoned among his claims to the gratitude of his subjects.

The Court of Milan during the reign of the first Sforza Duke presented a picture of domestic life remarkable both for its happiness and for its simplicity. Francesco and Bianca had eight children. Galeazzo, Ippolita, Filippo and Sforza were born while their father was still fighting his way to the throne. Lodovico, Ascanio, Elisabetta and Ottaviano came after his accession. For some years Alessandro Sforza's daughter Battista was added to the family party. Left motherless at eighteen months, she was educated with her cousin and contemporary Ippolita until, in 1460, she married Francesco's old ally Federico of Urbino. During her husband's last war with Venice Bianca lived chiefly with her mother in the Castello of Pavia. Later on the old Visconti palace in Milan, known as the Court of Arengo, became the principal residence of the Duke. It was, however, in such a dilapidated condition that some years passed before it could be made habitable. The Castello of Milan remained nothing more than a fortress throughout Francesco's lifetime, but its park and gardens formed a favourite hunting-ground for the Duke and his sons. Besides Milan and Pavia there were the Castles of Abbiategrasso and Vigevano, whither the Court retired for change of air and country life. All the arrangements of the Court were simple and even primitive. In 1463 Bianca had four ladies-in-waiting and Ippolita one. Nobles, secretaries and chamberlains were all lodged in the palace, yet the expenses of the household amounted to less than twenty-two thousand ducats a year. On one occasion Galeazzo was expected to arrive in Milan with the Marquis of Mantua on a Saturday. Francesco thereupon wrote to him that he must delay his entry, "for on that day the ladies will be washing their hair and the troops have their work to do". Hence it would

be better to spend Saturday at Lodi and to enter Milan on Sunday when everybody would be *in festa*.¹

Francesco was himself no great scholar, yet he was an ardent admirer of learning, and both he and Bianca took the keenest interest in their children's education. Many of the most prominent men of letters of the day were numbered among their tutors, including the Greek scholar Lascaris, the poet Valagussa and the humanist Barzizza. Baldo Martorelli, pupil of the famous Vittorino da Feltre, after teaching Ippolita as a child, accompanied her to Naples, where he remained as the secretary of his former pupil. Even the great Filelfo was pressed into the service, and wrote a treatise upon Galeazzo's education. Owing to his insistence upon the equal development of mind and body, the boy's day was carefully divided between intellectual studies, which included theology, classics and the art of government, and physical exercises, such as dancing, riding, fencing, and the favourite Italian game of *pallone*. When Bianca was absent from her children she required full reports of their progress. In 1457 Guinforte Barzizza² wrote to inform the Duchess that Galeazzo had taken some medicine "joyfully and without any opposition or sign of annoyance," which conduct was judged by the worthy humanist to proceed from a well-regulated mind. When, in 1466, Lodovico was living with his tutor at Cremona, he was required to write a Latin letter to his mother every week. The most notable accomplishment acquired by the young Sforza was the art of making suitable orations at State ceremonies. In 1452 the eight-year-old Galeazzo was sent to Ferrara to convey his father's greetings to the Emperor in the form of an oration composed by Filelfo. Frederick III. pronounced this feat to be nothing less than miraculous, and Galeazzo won similar praises for the two Latin orations which he made at Venice, in 1455, in honour of the Peace of Lodi. Ippolita was no less fluent than her brother. Her Latin

¹ Beltrami, L., *La Vita nel Castello di Milano al tempo degli Sforza*, p. 16. Milano, 1900.

² Cappelli, A., *Guinforte Barzizza, Maestro di Galeazzo Maria Sforza*. Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1894.

speech to Pius II. at the Diet of Mantua called forth a delighted reply from the Pope, whom past experience had rendered an authority upon the subject. Sometimes singing took the place of speeches. On the occasion of René of Anjou's visit to Milan in 1453, the children entertained him with French songs which they had been taught for his benefit. The care which Francesco and Bianca bestowed upon their children's education did not confine itself to learning. The young Sforza were made to write essays on such practical subjects as the following: "In what way, according to what rules, and with what artifices are treaties formed between princes?"¹ Bianca would remind their tutors that their task was to form princes rather than men of letters, and she herself spared no pains to incline her children towards "justice, benevolence, humanity and courtesy". Francesco's efforts in this direction are set forth in the letter of advice which he addressed to Galeazzo in 1457. These "*Suggerimenti di buon vivere*"² present Francesco's character in a new and singularly attractive light. Instead of the soldier-Duke, hardened by long years of fighting and scheming, they reveal an affectionate father, all anxiety for his son's welfare, and showing both wisdom and delicacy of feeling in the means by which he sought to promote it. "Galeazzo," begins this curious document, "you know that until now we have never been angry with you, nor have we given you a single blow." The reason of this gentle treatment is that Galeazzo has hitherto been merely a child, and that it has given Francesco an opportunity for observing his natural disposition both for good and for evil. Now, however, Galeazzo is old enough to distinguish between right and wrong, and his father hastens to set forth the rules of conduct which he must observe if he would keep the good opinion of his parents. Francesco has endeavoured to "fill the office of a good father," and now Galeazzo must play the part of a good son by remembering and carrying out the instructions which his father is about to give him. In so doing he will be blessed

¹ Pasolini, *Caterina Sforza*, vol. i., p. 23. Rome, 1893.

² *I suggerimenti di buon vivere dettati da Francesco Sforza pel figliuolo Galeazzo Maria, pubblicati a cura di Domenico Orano.* Rome, 1901.

by God and by his parents, and will win universal favour. There follows a list of ten precepts ranging over an odd variety of subjects. Galeazzo must do honour to God and to the Church; he must be respectful and obedient to his parents, to "Messer Guinforte" and to all other good and wise people; he must show politeness to all according to their rank, "whether with cap or with head or with knee"; he must be pleasant of speech with all, not forgetting his own servants; he must keep his hands under control and not lose his temper at every trifle; he must cultivate the justice and mercy which befits a ruler; he must not wish for everything which he sees, and he must learn to do without that which he cannot get by honest means; he must not practice deceit, nor tell lies, nor pay attention to slander and evil speaking; he must eat and drink nicely and in moderation; in view of his love of riding he must choose good horses. Such was Francesco's philosophy of life, a quaint mixture of morality, political expediency and common-sense, set forth with the utmost naivety and good faith for the guidance of his son. Well would it have been for his subjects if Galeazzo had followed his father's maxims.

The simplicity of their habits rendered the Duke and Duchess of Milan more than usually accessible to their subjects. Francesco's long years of active life made it impossible for him to do without exercise, and he was to be seen every day riding through Milan on his way to hunt in the Park of the Castello, or to inspect the building going on there and at the hospital. He had a friendly reply for all the salutations addressed to him, and he would greet many of the citizens by name. Francesco liked to dine in company, and, besides the invited guests, anyone was free to come and lay petitions before him at this hour. At the end of dinner the children would come in from their walk to say good-night to the Duke before retiring to their own apartments. Bianca, as the last of the Visconti, played a more prominent part in the State than she would have done under ordinary circumstances. She was held to be "most gracious in giving audience," she visited the chief citizens in their own homes, and she won all hearts by her frequent intercession on behalf of those who had incurred her husband's displeasure. Wherever

Francesco and Bianca went they were generally accompanied by some of their children. A visit which the Duchess paid to a certain Don Tommaseo de' Rieti has found its way into history owing to the four-year-old Ascanio who having detected a portrait of the Duke hanging in one of the rooms cried out in triumph: "Why, there's my papa!" ("*He elè qui lo mio padre.*")¹ Francesco's illness, in 1461, cast the first shadow over the family life. He was seized with a serious attack of dropsy and for some time he lay at death's door. As soon as he was well enough to mount a horse, he resumed his daily rides in order to show himself to the people, and so to dissipate the rumours of his death. By the following spring he was supposed to have regained his normal health, yet keen observers noticed that the vigour and agility of former years did not return. Four years later a second attack of dropsy proved fatal. Thus, on 8th March, 1466, died Francesco Sforza at the age of sixty-five. For two days his body lay in state at the Court of Arengo, arrayed in the ducal robes with the sword which had helped to win them between his hands. He was then buried in the Duomo, and all Milan mourned the loss of one whom they looked upon "not only as a Duke but as a revered father".

"Sforza's political ability," says a French historian,² "equalled his military genius." This was certainly the opinion of his contemporaries, who valued him no less as a statesman than as a soldier. From the day of his victory at Aquila he was recognised by friends and foes alike as the chief of Italian mercenaries, and many a *condottiere* was proud to claim him as his master. "I should always wish to fight with you at my side, for then I should not think it possible to lose," Galeazzo Sforza once said rather patronisingly to the Duke of Urbino. "I learned everything from His Excellency Duke Francesco, your father,"³ was Federico's prompt reply, and Galeazzo's youthful arrogance was silenced. Such was the reputation of Francesco the *condottiere*, while for Francesco the statesman

¹ Dina, A., *Lodovico Il Moro prima della sua venuta al governo*. Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1886.

² Gaillard, *Histoire de François I.*

³ Vespasiano, *Vita di Federico da Montefeltro*, p. 106.

was reserved the friendship of Cosimo dei Medici, of Pius II. and of Louis XI. Three very distinct personalities, they were alike in their appreciation of sound political judgment, and all three turned to Francesco as their fellow-worker and adviser. Cosimo and Francesco together originated the policy of the Triple Alliance. The establishment of the illegitimate line of Aragon in Naples was due to the united efforts of Francesco and Pius II. Thanks to Francesco's support, Louis XI. carried through his peace policy in Italy in the teeth of the opposition of his Court. Francesco's fame spread even to far-off England, where in the list of knights elected to the Order of the Garter under Edward IV. is to be found the name of Francis Sfortia. In physique he resembled the typical fighting hero. Pius II. describes him as he appeared at the Diet of Mantua in 1459, riding like a youth in spite of his fifty-eight years, tall of stature, majestic and grave of countenance, always calm and affable in his speech, behaving in everything as a true prince. In his *condottiere* days, Francesco was undaunted by cold or hunger or pain. Few could rival him in any athletic exercises. He wanted little sleep, yet when the opportunity came no noise of the camp was sufficient to keep him awake. In character, too, Francesco was essentially a man of action, blunt, practical, almost matter-of-fact. When his ministers were anxiously consulting astrologers in order to find a favourable day for the garrison to enter the Castello of Milan, Francesco declared that he "paid no heed to such subtleties".¹ Anything in the nature of display was distasteful to him, and he was always frugal in the matter of food. He won his soldiers' hearts by remembering the names of their horses. He never forgot those who served him, and he was in consequence generally served well. Although naturally humane, he did not shrink from cruelty when he considered it necessary. Failure, in his eyes, was the one unpardonable crime. Moreover, thanks to his remarkable power of adapting himself to the needs of the time, it was a crime which he very rarely committed. All through Francesco's career can be traced the gradual subjugation of the soldier to the statesman. Naturally frank, generous,

¹ Beltrami, L., *La Vita nel Castello di Milano*, p. 17.

proud and impetuous, he learned to meet craft with counter-craft, to husband his resources and to bear with the caprices of his father-in-law and of the Ambrosian Republic. Above all he learned to bide his time. Over and over again he abandoned his immediate object to embark upon a fresh method of securing the great aim of his life. Having failed to win the hand of Bianca by fighting for Filippo Maria Visconti, he eventually secured his bride by fighting against him. He clung to the March of Ancona so long as it seemed likely to serve as a stepping-stone to Milan. He sold his last city there when it tended to become an obstacle in his path. His persistence with regard to ends was, indeed, so great that it made him an opportunist as to the means which he employed. Such a combination is of more value than the most favourable conjunction of stars. For the rest, Francesco belongs essentially to the earlier half of the fifteenth century, to the era which preceded the Renaissance. As in the sphere of architecture his function was to build rather than to decorate, so in the sphere of politics he ranks with Cosimo dei Medici among the founders of Italian tyrannies, who prepared the way for the *tyrannis* in its glory under the auspices of such men as Lorenzo Il Magnifico and Lodovico Il Moro.

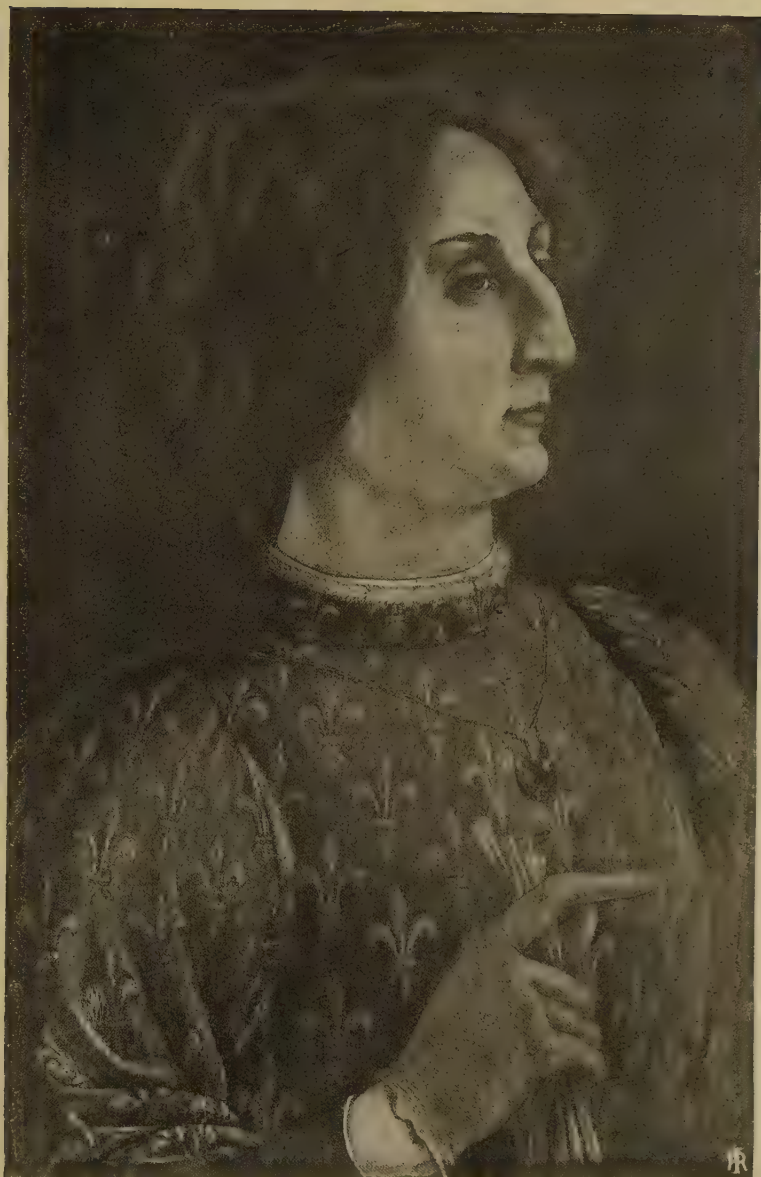
CHAPTER V

GALEAZZO MARIA SFORZA

(1466—1476)

AT the time of Francesco's death, the heir to the Duchy of Milan was still in France. Galeazzo was making preparations to leave his winter quarters in Dauphiné in order to visit the French Court, when news came which forced him to turn his steps with all speed towards Milan. Bianca wrote herself to say that the Duke was dangerously ill, and that it was necessary to be prepared for the worst. "Therefore," she continued, "we wish you immediately on receipt of this letter to mount horse . . . bringing with you Count Gasparro . . . and to come away post-haste without any delay."¹ Francesco's death must have occurred almost before this missive reached Galeazzo, and with the throne already vacant, he could by no means reckon upon a favourable reception in the Duchy. The loss of a powerful Duke would naturally give rise to attempts to overthrow the dynasty, and Galeazzo had the remembrance of the general unsettlement at the time of his father's illness to show him what might be expected now. Hence the new Duke thought it prudent to set out for his dominions disguised as the servant of a Milanese merchant who was travelling from Lyons. In spite of this precaution he was attacked by some Piedmontese peasants, who besieged him for three days in the church to which he fled for safety. At length the Council of Turin came to his rescue, and on 17th March Galeazzo entered Novara escorted by the members of the Council and other Piedmontese nobles.² The leader of this attack was a certain Agostino, Abbot of Casanova, who, reckoning on the appearance

¹ Pasolini, *Caterina Sforza*, vol. iii., Doct. 8. ² *Op. cit.*, Doct. 9.



Brogi

GALEAZZO MARIA SFORZA
PORTRAIT BY ANTONIO POLLAIUOLO
Uffizi Gallery, Florence

of rival claimants to the Duchy, had hoped to turn the possession of Galeazzo's person at so critical a moment to pecuniary advantage. When at last Galeazzo reached Milan he found that all was quiet, and that his accession was treated as the natural consequence of Francesco's death. This peaceful opening of the new reign was due in large measure to the promptitude of the Duchess. On the very day of her husband's death Bianca summoned the Secret Council in order to exact an oath of allegiance from its members, and to bid them provide for the internal tranquillity of the Duchy. At the same time she wrote to the chief powers of Italy asking them to aid in maintaining the young Duke upon his throne. Foremost among those who proffered support to the House of Sforza was the King of France. Before setting out for Italy Galeazzo had written, in compliance with his mother's instructions, to inform Louis XI. of the reason of his departure, promising to return if Francesco should recover, and begging that the King would "take some thought for the preservation of our State" should the Duke's illness prove fatal. Louis XI. replied by a letter addressed to his "most dear and much loved aunt" ("*Très chère et très amée tante*"), in which he expressed his displeasure at the "hindrance" which had befallen Galeazzo in Piedmont and his determination to uphold the Sforza dynasty as if it were his own.¹ A year later he confirmed Galeazzo in the possession of Genoa and Savona, making special mention of the "honourable and profitable services that our brother and cousin Galeazzo Maria . . . has freely rendered to us and to the crown of France".² Piero dei Medici and Ferrante of Naples also came to the aid of their ally by providing men and money for the defence of Milan. All the chief Italian States save Venice sent embassies of condolence upon Francesco's death and of congratulation upon his son's accession. Thus did the triumphs of Francesco's foreign policy enable Galeazzo to tide over the first difficult moments of his rule.

Galeazzo allowed over three years to elapse after his accession before he went through the ceremony of popular election. He hoped eventually to obtain the imperial investiture. There-

¹ *Op. cit.*, Doct. II.

² Sorbelli, *Francesco Sforza a Genoa*, Doct. 49.

fore he was anxious not to offend the Emperor by doing anything, in the meantime, which might be considered to prejudice the imperial rights over Milan. In 1469 Frederick III. again visited Italy, and Milanese ambassadors went to Ferrara to ask for the investiture. Frederick III. had not the means at his disposal for an attack on Milan, but he proved obstinate in his determination not to recognise the usurpation of an imperial fief. The ambassadors were refused audience and the Emperor studiously avoided Sforza's territories throughout his visit. From henceforth Galeazzo abandoned the idea of imperial investiture as hopeless. In December, 1469, the Council of Nine Hundred met to swear fealty to the Duke in the name of the citizens of Milan, and Galeazzo, as his father before him, based his authority upon popular consent. Soon afterwards Galeazzo went to Vigevano where he received an oath of fealty from representatives of the other cities in his dominions, in order that they might be spared the necessity of entering the capital. The episode forms a curious instance of the undying jealousy which existed between Milan and the subject-cities of the Duchy.

Galeazzo Maria began his reign at the age of twenty-two. Already he had shown signs of the uncontrolled passions and of the extravagance and vanity which marked his career as Duke. He forms, in fact, a striking example of a child upon whose education every care has been lavished and who nevertheless turns out badly. The early reports of his tutor, Guinforte Barzizza, and of his uncle and guardian, Lancelotto del Maino, show Galeazzo to have been, for the most part, obedient and industrious. When in 1457 Agnese del Maino brought a gentleman from Navarre to visit her grandchildren, he declared that he had never seen such intelligent and well-mannered children. From this time, however, Galeazzo began to travel about to neighbouring Courts, and the attentions which he received were enough to turn any boy's head. Duke Borso d'Este, whom Galeazzo visited in 1457, announced that his chief object was to send his young guest home "satiated and stuffed with Ferrarese pleasure".¹ Two years later Galeazzo went to

¹ Cappelli, A., *Guinforte Barzizza, Maestro di Galeazzo Maria Sforza*. Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1894.

Florence in order to meet Pius II. and to accompany him to Mantua. He was taken to dine at Cosimo's villa at Careggi where music and dancing were arranged for his benefit.¹ He rode at the Pope's right hand on all public occasions. He was complimented upon his speeches. His learning was accounted marvellous. All this flattery the boy probably took to himself and did not think to ascribe the greater part of it to a desire to please his powerful father. Certain it is that from this time complaints began to arise of Galeazzo's wildness and self-will. In 1459 Agnese del Maino wrote to tell Bianca of his bad behaviour, and a year later Francesco had perforce to admit that "Galeazzo fears no one and does whatever enters his head".² In 1463 Galeazzo possessed a separate establishment from that of his parents, with a private kitchen and a more costly style of living. Amusement and luxury were already his chief concern, as was repeatedly shown during his expedition to France. Francesco's small faith in his son's military capacity may be gaged by his insistence that Galeazzo should always follow the advice of Vimercate. Galeazzo's first letter to his father described the delights of visiting Maria of Savoy at Vercelli, where, according to Savoyard custom, he could kiss twenty damsels in one evening. Later on he received a stern rebuke from Francesco for so forgetting his dignity as a commander as to hunt and joust with his soldiers.³ Such youthful failings are significant of the future when, in spite of his talents, Galeazzo Maria undermined the stability of his throne by his refusal either to control himself or to submit to control.

When Galeazzo was safely established in Milan, the negotiations for his marriage with Bona of Savoy were resumed. Although Galeazzo was not able to see his future bride while he was in France, the Milanese ambassador, Giorgio Annone, visited the French Queen and her sister at Orleans in February, 1466. "I remained with the Queen for more than half an hour," Annone wrote to the Duchess of Milan, "but for the most part

¹ Cf. letter from Galeazzo to Francesco Sforza, 23rd April, 1459, given by Fabriczy. Jahrbuch, 1904.

² Cappelli, A., *op. cit.*

³ Ghinzoni, P., *Spedizione Sforzesca in Francia.*

I had my eye upon her sister, who seemed never to tire of looking at me." Both ladies sent messages to Galeazzo, and Annone professed entire satisfaction with the result of his visit. "I think," he concludes, "that if Your Highness saw her (Bona) she would be much pleased with so beautiful a lady. I believe, moreover, that she possesses every virtue, but if I had been able to see her once or twice more, I could have given a truer judgment."¹ At length, in May, 1468, Tristano Sforza set out for France to act as the Duke's proxy in the marriage ceremony, which took place at the Château of Amboise. The alliance had been concluded by Louis XI. without reference to Bona's brother, Amadeus IX. of Savoy, who was virtually at war with Milan. Hence Bona had to make her journey by way of Marseilles and Genoa in order to avoid passing through Savoyard territory. By some strange freak of fortune, it was Lodovico Sforza who first welcomed on Lombard soil the sister-in-law whom he was eventually to oust from her position in Milan. The meeting between Galeazzo and Bona took place at Novi, and the new Duchess thereupon discarded her French clothes to dress henceforth after the fashion of Lombardy. Louis XI. had fixed upon Vercelli as Bona's dowry, but as the town was not his to give Galeazzo must proceed to conquer it from Savoy. War with so near a neighbour was, however, too dangerous to be prolonged, and after some fighting Galeazzo bought peace by the surrender of his claims to Vercelli. The treaty paved the way for closer union with Savoy. In 1474 Philibert I., the son and successor of Amadeus, was betrothed to his first cousin, the infant daughter of the Duke and Duchess of Milan. Connected by marriage with both France and Savoy, Galeazzo had little fear of trouble upon the western frontiers of his dominions, an advantage which fully compensated for a dowerless bride.

Until November, 1467, Galeazzo ruled Milan in conjunction with his mother. From that date, however, Bianca's name ceased to appear upon public documents. The young Duke resented Bianca's share in the government, complaining that

¹ Pasolini, *Caterina Sforza*, vol. iii., Doct. 7.

he was treated "as if he were a boy of little intelligence".¹ Not unnaturally the breach between mother and son widened after Galeazzo's marriage, and at length in October, 1468, Bianca decided to leave Milan for her own dowry town of Cremona. She went no farther than Melegnano, where she died after a few days' illness. Rumour at once attributed her death to Galeazzo's poison, although absolutely no evidence has been produced in support of this view. Earlier in the year Bianca had been laid up at Cremona with a chill which she had caught on her journey from Milan,² and it is most probable that another such chill caused her death. Bianca appears to have been at all times a bad traveller. In a letter written by Francesco in 1463, the Duke expresses his sorrow for his wife's sufferings during a ride from Lodi, and begs that for his sake she will follow her doctor's advice and not do such rash things again.³ Galeazzo's guilt lies rather in the cruelty and self-will which drove Bianca from Milan, and which embittered if it did not actually hasten her end. The Duke came to Melegnano in time to see his mother alive. She bequeathed to him Cremona with the stipulation that its revenues should be shared with his brothers. "I commend to you my Milanese and all our other subjects," were among her last words. Bianca was attended on her death-bed by some friars who were returning from a Chapter at Lodi, and had turned aside to visit the Duchess. In the eyes of "her Milanese" the visit seemed almost miraculous, especially when the story was coupled with that of a great comet, which had been seen in Milan a few days before Bianca's death, and which disappeared into the courtyard of the Castello at the very hour when she breathed her last. By such strange tales did the people of Milan express their love for the last of the Visconti and their sorrow at her loss. Bianca was a woman of remarkable gifts, and she had proved her excellence as a wife,

¹ Sabadino, *Gynevra de le clare donne*.

² Pasolini, *op. cit.*, vol. iii., Doct. 15. Cf. also a letter of 8th June, 1468, in which Bianca begs her son Lodovico not to be disturbed about her health as "by God's grace we are now well, although we still suffer a little from our chest complaint".—Archivio di Stato di Milano, *Potenze Sovrane, Lodovico Il Moro, Vicende personali*.

³ Pasolini, *op. cit.*, vol. i., p. 20.

as a mother and as a sovereign. Her son had, indeed, shown himself ungrateful, yet she retained until the last the esteem and affection of her subjects.

As far as the external relations of the Duchy were concerned Galeazzo Maria had but to carry on his father's policy, and it is only fair to admit that he did so with considerable success. While Galeazzo's reign inaugurated a closer union between Milan and France, it also witnessed, on more than one occasion, concerted action on the part of the members of the Triple Alliance. The peace of Italy was a delicate plant which might languish with any change in the political atmosphere, and it was generally expected that Galeazzo's accession would provoke fresh hostilities on the part of Venice. Milan was probably saved by the Turkish war, which forced the Venetians to concentrate their energies elsewhere. When, however, in 1467 an opportunity arose for an indirect attack on the Triple Alliance, Venice promptly availed herself of it. Diotsalvi Neroni, having failed to stir up opposition to the Medici at home, came that year to Venice in the hope of bringing about an attack on Florence from without. The Senate did nothing officially, but they allowed their former *condottiere*, Colleone, to enter Neroni's service. At the head of an army largely recruited in Venetian territory, Colleone prepared to descend on Florence by way of Faenza and the Val Lamone. It was now Sforza's turn to render aid to the Medici. Galeazzo himself headed the Milanese contingent which set out for Romagna to join the Neapolitan forces under Alfonso of Calabria, and the Florentines under Roberto San Severino. The campaign which followed brought little military glory to the Duke of Milan. Federico of Urbino, who commanded the united forces of the Triple Alliance, found his cautious policy compromised by Galeazzo's rashness. At last the Ten of War thought it wise to remove the Duke of Milan from the field of action by inviting him to a conference at Florence. During his absence the Triple Alliance gained their one important victory at La Molinella, near Imola. Soon afterwards Galeazzo had to hurry to the defence of his own dominions against the encroachments of

Savoy. Finally, in April, 1468, thanks to the threats of Louis XI. and to the mediation of Pope Paul II., Colleone consented to a peace, which should include all the Powers of Italy.

Before the end of the year the Triple Alliance had embarked upon a fresh campaign in the interests of the House of Malatesta at Rimini. Sigismondo Malatesta, having died without legitimate heir, Paul II. laid claim to Rimini as a lapsed fief. Yet the increase of papal power in the Romagna was unwelcome to every Italian State, and especially to the Triple Alliance. Through Romagna ran the great *Via Æmilia*, the highway which connected the Lombard cities with Rome and Naples, while the towns on the route commanded the passes of the Apennines, which were among the chief avenues of Florentine trade. Hence Federico of Urbino once more took the field at the head of the armies of Milan, Naples and Florence, in order to support the cause of Roberto Malatesta, the eldest of Sigismondo's many illegitimate sons. Meanwhile Sigismondo's widow, the famous Isotta, negotiated with Venice in the interests of her own son Sallustio. The Pope was induced to accept Sallustio as his candidate, and thus the five Powers were pitted against each other as the champions of rival Malatesta claimants. For two months Rimini was besieged by the armies of the Church, until Roberto Malatesta, by a clever ruse, drew the enemy into the open to be crushed by Federico of Urbino. Thus Roberto recovered all his father's dominions, and when, a few months later, Sallustio's dead body was found in a trench at Rimini, few hesitated to brand his half-brother with the crime. The Colleonic and Malatesta wars, although of secondary importance in themselves, are interesting as practical illustrations of the policy of the Triple Alliance. By means of concerted action on the part of the three States, Florence was saved from a threatened revolution, the balance of power was maintained in the face of papal and Venetian ambitions, and the peace of Italy was restored after what were but trifling ruptures.

Never perhaps were the relations between Milan and Florence closer or more cordial than in the years which followed these two wars. On the birth of the heir to the Duchy in 1469,

Lorenzo dei Medici went to Milan to stand sponsor to the little Gian Galeazzo. The diamond which he gave to Bona on this occasion so gratified Galeazzo's taste for jewels that he asked Lorenzo to be the godfather of all his children. Yet Lorenzo brought no more good fortune to his godchild than did the auspicious name with which this luckless descendant of the Visconti was endowed. Lorenzo had not long returned home when the death of his father placed him at the head of the Florentine State. Thereupon the alliance with Naples and Milan was renewed in his name and in that of his brother Giuliano. In the spring of 1471 the Duke and Duchess of Milan went to Florence to fulfil a vow at the Church of the Annunciata and to pay a return visit to their Medicean allies. Corio waxes eloquent over the splendours of the ducal cortège which numbered some two thousand horses, as well as twelve coaches, which were dragged by mules across the Apennines for the use of Bona and her ladies. Cloth of gold and of silver formed the predominating element in the costumes of the train, while every servant had a new silk suit of the Sforza colours. In order to while away the tedium of the journey Galeazzo's favourite dogs, falcons and musical instruments were added to the party. The Florentines were duly impressed by the splendour and liberality of the Duke of Milan, who in return for a few flowers would give ducats. Nevertheless, they openly expressed their horror at seeing Galeazzo and all his Court so disregard Lent as to "eat meat daily without respect for the Church or for God".¹ Galeazzo and Bona were lodged at the Medici palace in the Via Larga, and manifold were the entertainments provided for them. One misfortune, however, occurred. During the performance of a mystery play representing the descent of the Holy Ghost at San Spirito, the sacred tongues of fire caught the church which was reduced to ashes. The present church, of which Brunelleschi was the architect, had already been begun hard by the old building. Thus the fire caused the work to be hurried on so that the new San Spirito was ready for use in 1481. On leaving Florence the Duke and Duchess visited Lucca, from whence they re-

¹ Machiavelli, *Storia Fiorentina*.

turned home by way of Genoa and Pavia. The next year the Triple Alliance was strengthened by the betrothal of the infant heir of Milan to his cousin, the daughter of Alfonso and Ippolita of Calabria. Italy could enjoy a few years of tranquillity, thanks to the good understanding which prevailed between the three young allies and contemporaries, Alfonso of Calabria, Lorenzo dei Medici and Galeazzo Maria Sforza.

In spite of the friendly relations between its members, the seeds of future rupture within the Triple Alliance were sown during the reign of Galeazzo. Paul II. on his death in August, 1471, was succeeded by Pope Sixtus IV., and the new Pope at once set himself to provide for his numerous relatives out of the States of the Church. It so happened that the town of Imola in Romagna fell at this time into the hands of the Duke of Milan. Imola was nominally a papal fief, yet the ruling family of Manfredi had long treated it as a private possession, and they now ceded it to Galeazzo with the idea that it should pass under Florentine influence as had done the other Manfredi city of Faenza. Lorenzo was already in negotiation with Milan for its sale when Sixtus IV. proposed to buy Imola for his nephew Girolamo Riario, on the understanding that he should marry Caterina Sforza, the Duke's illegitimate daughter. In 1473 Cardinal Pietro Riario visited Milan. According to Corio the object of the visit was to propose to Galeazzo that the Pope should make him King of Lombardy if he in his turn would work for the succession of Pietro to the Holy See. This, however, could have been little but Court gossip. The chief subject of discussion was the affair of Imola. Pietro was received in Milan as if he had been the Pope himself, and the negotiations for the sale and for the marriage were satisfactorily concluded. Sixtus duly invested Girolamo with Imola, while the Duke of Milan promised his daughter with a dowry of ten thousand ducats.¹ Caterina was then a child of eleven. Hence it was not until after Galeazzo's death that she quitted Milan to join Girolamo in their city-state. Meanwhile Lorenzo dei Medici naturally resented the march which Sixtus IV. had stolen upon him. Although it produced no

¹ Pasolini, vol. iii., Doct. 52.

rupture between Milan and Florence it helped to bring about a coolness towards the Papacy which did not end here. The immediate result was a league between Milan, Florence and Venice in 1474, which was answered by a counter league between Naples and the Papacy. During the reign of Galeazzo, however, this fresh grouping of the five Powers had no outward effect.

During the last years of Galeazzo's life Milan was drawn into the quarrel between Louis XI. and Charles the Bold of Burgundy. When in 1474 Louis XI. stirred up the Swiss to invade Franche-Comté, Charles the Bold approached Galeazzo by means of the Duchess of Savoy, who acted as Regent for her son Philibert. Milanese ambassadors were despatched to the Court of Charles the Bold, while the Bastard of Burgundy visited Galeazzo at his capital. Yet the Duke of Milan could not long remain blind to the danger of embroiling himself with the Swiss and of sacrificing the friendship of France. After Charles the Bold's two defeats at Granson and Morat, Galeazzo thought it prudent to change sides. At the same time the Duchess of Savoy, whose alliance with Burgundy had brought her little save loss of territory, began to court a reconciliation with her brother, Louis XI. Charles the Bold, thereupon, took her prisoner, and young Duke Philibert fled to Milan, where he called upon Galeazzo for aid. Hence in October, 1476, the Duke of Milan entered Piedmont at the head of a considerable army. He succeeded in conquering back many places which had been occupied by the Burgundians, and when he returned to Milan for Christmas, it was with the intention of renewing the conflict in the following spring. Yet fate willed otherwise. Early in January Charles the Bold met his death at Nancy, while Milan was still in a state of ferment owing to the fall of her Duke beneath the dagger of an assassin.

In the sphere of foreign politics Galeazzo's political ability and his open-handed magnificence served to hide his obvious failings in a way that it was impossible for them to do in matters of internal government. The statutes of the reign form an instructive commentary upon the character of the

prince, upon his vanity, his extravagance, his cruelty and also upon his capacity for business and genuine interest in the improvement of his dominions. The Duke could brook the interference of his father's advisers as little as he could that of his mother. Hence many of Francesco's veterans left the Court, and, among them, Alessandro Sforza, Lord of Pesaro, who fought in the Malatesta war against the forces of his nephew. Cecco Simonetta, however, remained, no longer as a secretary but as a leading member of the Secret Council. The extravagant expenditure of the new regime taxed the ducal camera to the uttermost. Thus throughout the reign there were murmurs at the increase of taxation and at the fresh burdens which were laid upon the Duchy. In 1467 general indignation was excited by the demand of a fourth part of the annual revenues of all ecclesiastical benefices on the ground that clergy as well as laity should contribute to the maintenance of the State. Still more unpopular was the levy of the *inquinto*, that is, of an additional fifth upon the already existing taxes on meat, wine, bread and other necessities of life.¹ So great was the discontent aroused that Galeazzo resolved to abolish the *inquinto*, and in 1474 the Council of Nine Hundred met to give its consent to a decree framed for this purpose. Yet it could have been little more than the name of *inquinto* that was abolished. The Duke stipulated that his Exchequer should not be made a penny the poorer by the concession, and the tax, apparently, continued until it was removed by Simonetta after Galeazzo's death. In 1469 the decree that the streets of Milan should be paved with stones at the expense of the citizens all but produced a revolution. Under Francesco it appears that the cost of paving had been borne by the Exchequer and hence the outburst of resentment. Galeazzo further replenished his resources by the revival of State lotteries and of the sale of offices, both of which means of raising money had been renounced by his father. Vast as were the sums which the Duke spent on luxury, his was no reckless extravagance. He showed himself surprisingly scrupulous with regard to the payment of

¹ Ghinzoni, P., *L'Inquinto ossia una tassa odiosa del secolo xv.* Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1884.

his debts, and the ducal balance-sheet for the year 1476¹ shows a careful supervision of finance on his part. The fact that the balance is on the right side, in spite of some forty thousand ducats spent on jewels, bears witness both to Galeazzo's financial ability and to the wealth of Milan.

A reign of comparative peace, such as that of the second Sforza duke, could not fail to leave its mark upon the constitutional working of the Duchy. With Galeazzo living on his own dominions, free to interfere in all matters of government, the tendency of the despotism was naturally to become more absolute. Many of the ducal decrees are worthy of the most highly coloured tyrant of romance. Such a command as the following is as meaningless as it is cruel: "To the Podestà of Pavia, etc. No one in this city may dance after one o'clock at night on pain of his life."² There were frequent orders to the Podestà of subject-towns to supply forced labour for the ducal estates, and the men were required to bring with them their own axe or mattock. Yet the Italian dislike of wet weather was so far regarded for the labourers to be summoned "if it is fine, without rain and not otherwise."³ The feudal authority of the Duke over the Lombard nobles was strictly interpreted. When Count Giovanni Borromeo failed to respond to Galeazzo's command to send his son to the Court, he received the following significant despatch: "We marvel greatly that you have not sent your son as we wrote to you, but three days will not pass before you have cause to marvel at us". The next document in Morbio's collection is a command to the Magistrates of the Revenues to seize Borromeo's lands and possessions. Yet in spite of much that was arbitrary the despotism was still tempered. The Council of Nine Hundred, as has been already noticed, was summoned in 1474. Except for the purpose of swearing fealty, the Council had not met for twenty-four years, and the summons of this popularly elected body caused considerable excitement. Nevertheless, its legislative work was almost entirely formal in character. The representatives of

¹ Porro, G., *Lettere di Galeazzo Maria Sforza, Duca di Milano*. Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1878.

² Morbio, *Codice Visconteo-Sforzesco*, 1473. ³ *Op. cit.*, 1475.

each gate sat apart and were given no opportunity of consulting with each other. Moreover, it was expressly stipulated that the decrees laid before the Council might not be changed, either in word or effect, except with regard to certain minor points. Throughout his reign Galeazzo gave public audience in his own residence on two days in the week. If the Duke were absent his place was taken by his brothers. By this means, ran a ducal decree, "all people of whatever rank, estate or condition had free opportunity of speaking with and entreating His Excellency, if they claimed to be unduly burdened or injured".¹ As in England people tended to seek justice in the royal courts rather than in the local tribunals, so in Milan the ducal Councils encroached upon the ordinary judicial authorities. On more than one occasion, however, Galeazzo supported the constitutional against the bureaucratic elements in the Government. On the complaint of the College of Jurisprudence, Galeazzo forbade his Councils to commit civil causes to themselves or to interfere in any way with the jurisdiction of the College, unless causes were committed to them by "special letters signed by our own hand".² In the same way Galeazzo decided against those who wished to postpone the payment of their debts to the Commune by an appeal to the ducal authority. "The Vicar of Provision," he decreed, "represents the Commune of Milan and has the same authority as have the Magistrates of the Revenues. Hence in causes which are moved in the name of the Commune, he is a competent judge . . . neither is there appeal from his sentence."³

Galeazzo had a keen eye for the material development of the Duchy, especially if it could be effected without cost to himself. He was at pains to foster the silk industry by ordering five mulberry trees to be planted in every hundred poles of land, the trees being supplied if necessary by the magistrate of silk. Every March the owners of the trees were bound to gather the young leaves, and either dispose of them according to the instructions of the magistrate, or report that they were keeping them to feed their own silk-worms. The

¹ Formentini, 27th March, 1466.

² Giudice, P. del, *Il consiglio ducale e il Senato di Milano*.

³ Morbio, 1467.

cultivation of rice which, before the close of the Sforza era, had become one of the principal agricultural productions of the Duchy, was introduced under Galeazzo's auspices.¹ He also made an attempt to exploit the mineral resources of the Duchy. In 1475 a certain Andrea was given the right of mining for silver in "our valleys of Marchiorolo," with the promise of free profits for ten years, while the Duke himself organised an expedition to Bellinzona in search of rubies. More practical, perhaps, was the care spent on improving the Grand Canal and in extending it from Binasco to Pavia. The new branch of the canal enabled the Duke to perform the frequent journey between Milan and Pavia by boat. Moreover, the tolls and fines arising from the waterways of the Duchy formed a source of considerable profit, so much so that the administration of the Martesana Canal was sold to a private person, who undertook to pay the Duke four thousand lire a year and to provide two ships for his use. Yet the list of those who benefited by the canals, and who must consequently help to repair them, shows the real advantage which they brought to the Duchy, both as highways of trade and by turning the mills and watering the lands through which they flowed. Above all, the prosperity of Milan depended upon her trade, and it fell to the Duke to protect the commerce of the Duchy both against rivals and against itself. Hence the frequent edicts against adulterated goods and false measures, as for instance in 1467, when the Council of Justice ordered that all adulterated soap should be sent out of the city, and that for the future each soap-maker should have one stamp so that bad soap might be traced. Hence, also, the decree that all merchants going from Genoa to Milan, and thence south to Piacenza, must pass through Pavia, so that the city might not lose her tolls. Galeazzo's reform of the coinage in 1474 must have been of great benefit to a trading community. A proposal was made at the time to fix the ducat below its true value for the payment of taxes, but this piece of trickery the Duke, to do him justice, refused to countenance.

Galeazzo and Bona spent the first few months of their

¹ Motta, E., *Arch. Stor. Lomb.*, 1905, p. 392.



A. Ferrario

GALEAZZO MARIA SFORZA AND BONA OF SAVOY

married life in the *Cassino*, a little house in the gardens of the Castello at Milan. They wished apparently to have a rustic and primitive honeymoon, for their temporary abode is described as being "surrounded by water and adjacent to the hen-house".¹ By the end of the year, however, the Castello was so far completed as to be habitable, and from that time there began an era of splendour in Milan which paved the way for still greater magnificence under Lodovico Il Moro. In March, 1469, fifty ladies were invited to the Castello to take part in the celebration of the Duchess's birthday. The guests came from all parts of the Duchy, and the state vessel, or *Bucintoro*, went to Abbiategrasso to convey many of these ladies to Milan by way of the Grand Canal. A few years later Corio describes the appointment of a hundred courtiers clad in mulberry-colour and crimson, with an annual salary of a hundred ducats. Of these the historian's father formed one, while young Corio, who was then fourteen, joined a company of twenty pages who attended the Duke on all occasions. Galeazzo's love of finery found scope in the choice of liveries for his suite and of costumes to be worn in the Court tournaments. S. George's Day formed the great military festival of the year, when the Duke went to the Duomo to hear Mass and to assist at the blessing of the standards. A tournament of special magnificence completed the ceremonies of the day. In 1475 no less than twelve hundred and five cloaks of velvet or of scarlet cloth and embroidered with various devices of the House of Sforza were ordered for the occasion. The Duke's youthful love of sport did not desert him after his accession, and he took pains to improve the grounds of his various residences for hunting purposes. At his command the Park of Pavia was stocked with hares, while a new park was made at Villanova. This was the site of the ducal kennels, where some hundred and twenty dogs were kept in the charge of the Castellan. As a patron of art Galeazzo instituted the great work of decorating the Castello of Milan. As a patron of learning he encouraged the formation of a printing company in 1472, owing to which Milan had the honour of being the first Italian city to print Greek books. Galeazzo's peculiar

¹ Beltrami, L., *Vita nel Castello di Milano*, p. 20.

hobby was, however, the choir of his private chapel. No pains were spared to obtain singers. On one occasion a certain Gasparo was sent to Picardy and Flanders for "ten good sopranos, one high tenor like Bovis, one tenor like Peroto and two double basses".¹ The Duke's desire to hear a certain lute-player and his companion, who performed on the viola, during a stay at Abbiategrasso, led to a curious letter on the subject. "Tell them," wrote Galeazzo in reference to the performers who were to appear before him the next day, "that to-morrow they must not be intoxicated, but that for the rest of the year we give them leave to do as they please, so long as they are sober to-morrow."²

Many were the illustrious visitors who came to Milan during the reign of Galeazzo. In 1469 a succession of ambassadors came to see the Castello, including representatives of the King of France and the Archduke of Austria. In 1472 the Duke ordered rooms to be prepared in the Castello for "two foreign gentlemen, M. Filippo and Mons^{re} de Commynes," whom he intended shortly to bring to Milan.³ The visit of King Christian I. of Denmark has been rendered famous by his condemnation of the ducal treasure as "unbefitting a true and generous prince". After staying with Galeazzo at Pavia King Christian was sent to Milan in a chariot drawn by four white horses, to be entertained at the Court of Arengo. He then went to Rome, and on his return journey through Lombardy the Podestà of Parma, Piacenza and Cremona received orders to provide for him as the Duke's guest. Tradition further relates that in spite of the King's disapproval of the treasure, he did not scruple to borrow ten thousand ducats from its owner. So important was the reception of ambassadors that, in 1468, some trustworthy Milanese officials drew up a paper of instructions for the guidance of their young Duke.⁴ The Duke must himself go out to meet ambassadors from the Pope or the Emperor, who took precedence over all others. He must also meet ambassadors

¹ Morbio, 1473. ² *Op. cit.*, 1475. ³ Beltrami, *Il Castello di Milano*.

⁴ Maspes, A., *Prammatica pel ricevimento degli ambasciatori, inviati alla Corte di Galeazzo Maria Sforza*. Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1890.

from France and from other royal Courts, and any prince who came in person. In other cases, it would be sufficient for Galeazzo to send two of his brothers and some nobles. French and imperial ambassadors must be lodged with the Court, and their expenses must be paid. For the Venetians and the Florentines, however, a present of some twenty-five ducats would suffice. Embassies from smaller States, such as Mantua or Montferrat, need only receive a present if the prince came in person, but gifts to the Genoese were recommended "considering the reputation and excellence of that city". It would have been well for Galeazzo if he had followed the advice of his ministers with regard to the treatment of Genoa. Apparently he did not consider that a subject-city was worthy of the splendours which he had lavished upon Florence. Hence when the loyal Genoese came out to greet their Duke and Duchess, on the occasion of their visit in 1471, they were both disappointed and offended to see them in ordinary travel-stained clothes. Matters were made worse when Galeazzo insisted upon staying in the Castelletto, and when, on his return home, he ordered that the fortifications should be increased. These marks of distrust did much to alienate Genoa from the House of Sforza and to sow the seeds of future trouble.

Great as was the outward magnificence, it could not hide the darker aspect of Galeazzo's Court. The immorality, from which none of the Sforza Dukes were free, reached its climax under Galeazzo, who was all unmindful of the political danger which Machiavelli saw in the false dealings of a prince with the women of his subjects. Lucrezia Landriano, the mother of Caterina Sforza, was the wife of Piero Landriano, a Milanese citizen of note. Yet Caterina grew up at the Milanese Court under the care of Bianca and later of Bona of Savoy, who treated her as if she were her own child. Lucia Marliano, the mistress of Galeazzo's later years, became Countess of Melzo, and was provided with a residence in the Porta Vercellina near the royal stables. Presents of clothes and jewels on the part of the Duke were of frequent occurrence. When Galeazzo ordered a piece of gold brocade similar to that worn by the Duchess "to be made so that our illustrious consort knows

nothing of it,"¹ it may be assumed that Lucia was the recipient. Most curious is the document assigning to Lucia and her children the profits of the Martesana Canal. In it Galeazzo refers to "the inborn virtues, the chaste life and the great beauty of Lucia de Marliano" which render her continually more dear to him and which make him wish that his gift should be the outward expression of their mutual love.² Galeazzo's correspondence with the Castellan of Binasco about a certain priest, who wrote verses describing the Duke as a "false villain," casts a lurid light upon the treatment of political offenders. The priest was condemned to perpetual imprisonment "in one of the worst dungeons of this our fortress". He only lived a few months, and in writing to inform Galeazzo of his death, the Castellan added that two other prisoners would soon share his fate. "Truly," ran the letter, "they could not be worse off than they are . . . not having so much as a rag of clothing between them."³ The chronicles of the day are full of stories of Galeazzo's cruelty and violence. They tell of a priest starved to death for prophesying that the Duke would only reign ten years; of a painter forced on pain of death to finish decorating a room in one night; of a poacher made to swallow, unskinned, the hare which he had caught; of a man who lost his hands for talking to one of Galeazzo's mistresses. Such tales do not all bear the test of history, yet, when repeated by contemporaries such as Corio, they show that Galeazzo was regarded in his own day as a man whose passions rendered him a wild beast. The Duke of Milan, as other of his contemporaries, coupled wrong-doing with strictness of religious observance. He made large gifts to churches and monasteries, while a stringent edict against all forms of trading on Sundays and Saints' days dates from his reign. When in 1473 the Duke intended to spend Lent in Milan, he sent full instructions for the preparation of the courtyard of the Castello where the people might gather to hear the preaching, to which Galeazzo listened from a window of his own apartments. Violence and religion joined hands in the command that one

¹ Beltrami, *Vita nel Castello di Milano*. ² Morbio, 1475.

³ Cappelli, A., Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1897, p. 147.

who had robbed and insulted three pilgrim monks should be hung on the Roman road with the following writing attached to his neck, "Let pilgrims alone".

Viewed in the light of his character, there is a tragic fitness in Galeazzo Maria's violent death. Yet his murder was the result of no popular uprising against a hated tyrant. He was rather the victim of an epidemic of assassination inspired by an all too practical interpretation of the classics. When in 1476 the Duke rode into Milan a few days before Christmas, three ravens hovered round him and refused to be driven away. A mysterious comet appeared in the sky, and Galeazzo's room in the Castello was reported to have been seen in flames. These sinister auguries did not, however, damp the spirits of the Duke. On Christmas Eve the Yule-log was solemnly burnt in the presence of the Court, and on Christmas Day Galeazzo heard the customary Masses in the ducal chapel. He was apparently at the height of his prosperity. A successful campaign had just been terminated, the Duke's troublesome brothers, Lodovico and Sforza, were safe in France, and as Galeazzo feasted in his favourite Sala delle Colombine, he congratulated himself openly upon the strength of the House of Sforza. The next day the Duke prepared to follow his usual custom of hearing Mass in the Church of S. Stefano on the festival of that saint. It was an extremely cold morning, and the snow rendered it bad going on foot, still worse on horseback. Hence there was considerable discussion as to whether the Duke should go. Bona, alarmed by bad dreams, begged her husband to stay at home, but Galeazzo persisted in his resolution, having previously discarded the steel cuirass prepared for him, "for fear of looking too fat". Before starting the Duke sent for his two little sons and embraced them most tenderly, seeming as if he were loth to part from them. Then the whole cortège rode towards San Stefano.

Meanwhile three conspirators and their accomplices had posted themselves on either side of the door through which the Duke must enter the church. Of these Andrea Lampugnano was an impecunious adventurer who had once been condemned to death by Francesco Sforza and had been pardoned by the

present Duke. He now sought to improve his fortunes in the general upheaval which he believed would follow upon Galeazzo's murder. Carlo Visconti avenged a sister, whom the Duke had dishonoured, while Girolamo Olgiati, a poet and a man of letters, acted purely with the desire to free his city from a tyrant. All three were instigated to the crime by Cola da Montana, a far from respectable old master of rhetoric, whom Galeazzo had once ordered to be publicly whipped for his misdeeds. He had so filled the young men's minds with the glory of tyrannicide, that they made their preparations for the murder in the spirit of saviours of society. For some time past Visconti, Lampugnano and Olgiati had met nightly in a lane behind the monastery of S. Ambrogio, there to rehearse the deed, in order that they might be prepared for every contingency. Finally, they had prayed to S. Ambrose and to S. Stephen to favour their "great and holy undertaking," begging them not to be offended at the shedding of blood "since by that blood the city and Duchy would return to liberty". Now, having heard Mass, they awaited the arrival of their victim.

When Galeazzo left the Castello, Corio took a short cut on foot, so that he arrived at S. Stefano in time to see the Duke alight and enter the church, with the ambassadors from Mantua and Ferrara on either side of him. Another eye-witness,¹ who afterwards wrote a full account of the murder to Florence, describes how Filippo Sforza and Branda Castiglione, Bishop of Como, came close behind the Duke. After them walked this unknown writer himself, with Ottaviano Sforza leaning on his arm, and the historian, Giovanni Simonetta, on Ottaviano's right hand, all three talking together as they crossed the atrium leading into the ancient basilica of S. Stefano. A great crowd had collected in the church, so much so that the lackeys went in front to clear a passage for the Duke. The procession had reached the entrance to the basilica itself, when suddenly Lampugnano threw himself forward on one knee, cap in hand, as if in the act of presenting a petition. An instant later Lampugnano had plunged his dagger into the Duke's body.

¹ Casanova, Prof. Eugenio, *L'uccisione di Galeazzo Maria Sforza e alcuni documenti Fiorentini*. Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1899.

His companions rushed upon their victim, and Sforza fell beneath a rain of blows. It was all over so quickly that the two ambassadors had hardly realised what was happening before Galeazzo's dead body lay on the floor of the church.¹ In the confusion which followed Olgiati and Visconti made their escape, but Lampugnano tripped over a lady's dress in his flight and was killed on the spot by a Moorish servant of the murdered Duke. Once the deed was done the conspirators had reckoned upon a general rising in their favour, and while Olgiati lay in hiding, his mind was busy with fresh plans for stirring on the populace. Only the sight of Lampugnano's mangled remains being dragged through the streets by a hooting mob convinced him that Milan, far from rejoicing over the death of her Duke, sought vengeance upon his murderers. A few days afterwards Olgiati fell into the hands of his enemies. Visconti was already taken, and very soon the heads of the assassins were exposed to view on the tower of the Broletto Nuovo. In spite of the tortures which preceded his death, young Olgiati never for one moment lost his sublime confidence in the righteousness of his cause. He wrote verses even in prison, and when called upon to give an account of the conspiracy, he compiled a Latin statement which gave scope to his literary ability. Dying, he declared that he would suffer ten times greater torments for so holy an end. *Mors acerba fama perpetua* were the last words upon his lips.

So ended the career of Galeazzo Maria Sforza. When the news of the murder reached Rome, Sixtus IV. exclaimed that the peace of Italy was dead, and in his own dominions the Duke was mourned as if he had been the most exemplary of rulers. A popular song of that date celebrates Galeazzo's virtues and calls upon his family, his subjects and all the Powers of Italy and Europe to mourn his loss and to pray for his soul. Galeazzo's genial manners and, in his better moments, a certain frankness and generosity, made him not unpopular. A story is told that when Lucia Marliano's priest refused to absolve her, the Duke threatened him with instant death. When,

¹ An inscription upon the pavement of the existing church marks the spot where Galeazzo fell.

however, the man still remained obdurate, Galeazzo let him go, saying that he did not know that there was so honest a priest in his dominions. On another occasion the Duke wrote to a needy noble saying that when the time came for marrying his daughters he wished to aid in paying the dowry. Yet such details, although they may relieve the blackness of the portrait, do not affect the true estimate of Galeazzo's character as set forth by Bona of Savoy. Troubled by the thought of her husband's evil life, and by the fact that he had died unshriven, she consulted a body of theologians as to the possibility of obtaining absolution for him after death. The verdict was that such absolution could be given by the Pope alone. Hence a most curious document¹ in which Bona, after reciting the crimes of her husband, whom "after God" she has "loved above all else," begs the Pope to free his soul from the pains of purgatory. Galeazzo, according to his wife, was "versed in warfare, both lawful and unlawful; in pillage, robbery and devastation of the country; in extortion of subjects; in negligence of justice; in injustice knowingly committed; in the imposition of new taxes which even included the clergy; in carnal vices; in notorious and scandalous simony and in various and innumerable other crimes." At the suggestion of the Pope this long list of sins was atoned for by a large contribution to the subsidy then being raised for the defence of the Holy See. Bona herself would have preferred the money to have been given to the hospital of Milan or to have been spent on the foundation of monasteries within the Duchy, so that restitution might be made in the place where the wrong was done. The incident is valuable for the light which it throws both upon the system of indulgences and upon the character of Galeazzo. Few princes have had their iniquities so candidly acknowledged by their wives, and few worse crimes have been thus translated into terms of money.

¹ Pasolini, *Caterina Sforza*, vol. iii., Doct. 70.

CHAPTER VI

GIAN GALEAZZO, DUKE—LODOVICO SFORZA'S RISE TO POWER

(1476—1492)

ON the very day of Galeazzo's murder, the Secret Council met in the Castello to proclaim young Gian Galeazzo Duke in his father's stead, under the guardianship of Bona of Savoy. Yet the real ruler of the Duchy was not the sickly boy of seven, nor the woman whose character Philippe de Commynes summed up in the one trenchant phrase, *dame de petit sens*. It was rather Francesco Sforza's former secretary, Cecco Simonetta, whose experience of the methods of government during the two preceding reigns made him alone capable of steering the bark of State through the troubled waters of a Regency. The death of a Duke always produced a certain amount of agitation in Milan, and the tragic circumstances of Galeazzo's end might well be expected to intensify the disturbance. In order to tide over the difficult moment, Simonetta arranged that the new reign should be inaugurated by a series of conciliatory measures. The detested *inquinto* was declared to be permanently removed from the taxes. Prisoners for debts and for minor offences were released. Galeazzo's creditors received promises of payment. Owing to the scarcity of bread in Milan, caused apparently by a bad harvest, the grist tax was suspended, and free importation of flour was permitted until the danger of famine should be averted. Thanks to these measures, ran a document of the day, "all would be filled with goodwill towards their rulers and would pray for their long life and happiness". Not content with conciliation, Bona wrote to Sixtus IV. imploring his help and protection should any disturbance occur in Milan. New fortifications

were begun at the Castello, and strict prohibitions were issued against carrying arms in the streets. These numerous preparations seemed somewhat unnecessary in view of the peaceful opening of the new reign. When on 1st January the above-mentioned witness of Galeazzo's murder wrote his letter to Florence, describing the events of the past week, he congratulated himself upon the entire absence of tumult in the city, and upon the way in which the chief States had rallied round Gian Galeazzo by sending ambassadors to Milan. Lodovico and Sforza were still in France and could not be back for twenty days. Meanwhile, he wrote, "this illustrious lady governs with the greatest prudence and good sense, and with the most fortunate results. She consults her Council about everything."¹

In spite of the tranquillity which prevailed in Milan, Simonetta had every reason to be anxious. A less clear eye than his could not fail to perceive signs of future trouble. The family of Simonetta came originally from Calabria, and their connection with Francesco Sforza dated from his marriage with the Calabrian heiress, Polissena Ruffa. Angelo Simonetta acted as Francesco's secretary throughout his career in the March, and Angelo's two nephews, Cecco and Giovanni, had grown up in Sforza service. When Cecco became prominent in Milan, the Ghibelline nobility at once treated this upstart foreigner as an enemy. From the days of his secretaryship Cecco was accused of leaning upon the Guelphic party, and it was clear that his accession to power would provoke the hostility of the leading families in Milan. Another element of disturbance lay in the Duke's five uncles, who now hoped to obtain a share in the government, which had been denied them during the preceding reign. Filippo, the eldest of the five, was a person of no importance. Tradition ascribes to him less than the normal supply of intellect, and he was completely overshadowed by his forcible brothers, Sforza and Lodovico. Of the two remaining brothers, Ascanio had already become a priest, and Ottaviano was little more than a boy. Yet the ambitions of the one and the youthful impetuosity of the other made them ready to join

¹ Casanova, *op. cit.* The writer of the letter was evidently a person of importance, possibly Simonetta himself.

in any movement which their elders might devise. Following the policy of Galeazzo Maria, Simonetta excluded the Sforza brothers from the Secret Council, in which was performed the true work of government. They were, indeed, made Presidents of the Council of Justice. Yet they were not to be pacified by honorary prestige. Hence the return of Lodovico and Sforza was the signal for a conspiracy between the princes and the Ghibelline nobility. Thanks to the intervention of Lodovico Gonzaga and of the various ambassadors gathered at Milan, the episode terminated in a peaceful settlement. The five brothers consented to retire from the Court, each being granted a palace in Milan and an income of twelve thousand five hundred ducats from the revenues of Cremona. Filippo apparently lived contentedly in his palace until his death in 1492, his name occurring only at rare intervals in the documents of the period. Before the year was out, however, Simonetta was involved in fresh conflict with the younger princes.

In the spring of 1477 Galeazzo's foolish conduct with regard to Genoa bore fruit in the shape of riots in favour of the exiled Fregosi. Lodovico and Ottaviano were sent to quell the rebellion, which they did with remarkable success. They returned in glory to Milan, more than ever determined to oust Simonetta from power. The imprisonment of Donato del Conte, one of the leading Ghibellines, on suspicion of treachery, gave his friends a pretext for taking arms against the Government. A large number of citizens joined the rebels, old names were revived to embitter fresh quarrels, and the Ghibellines, headed by the Sforza brothers, pitted themselves against the Guelphs of the Castello. For some time neither party would yield, until the Sforzeschi, fearing the ultimate triumph of the Government, took refuge in flight. Ottaviano Sforza was drowned in the act of crossing the Adda. Donato del Conte met his death in an attempt to escape from his prison at Monza. Roberto San Severino, another leading Ghibelline, escaped to France. In the face of these catastrophes the three remaining Sforza were forced to come to terms. They were allowed to keep their revenues but were relegated to separate districts at safe distances from Milan and from each other.

Sforza was confined to his estates at Bari. Lodovico was sent to Pisa and Ascanio to Perugia. For the time Simonetta had come to the end of his difficulties. The year closed with a treaty with the Swiss, which staved off threatened invasion from that quarter, and which renewed the free commercial intercourse that was so precious to dwellers upon both sides of the Alps.

Strong in the support of the chief Italian States and in the possession of the boy-Duke, Simonetta's government might have lasted throughout Gian Galeazzo's minority if it had not been for an event in Florence which caused a general upheaval in Italian politics. The coolness between Florence and Sixtus IV., which began over the sale of Imola, ripened into a quarrel over the appointment of an Archbishop to the vacant See of Pisa. Ferrante of Naples, moreover, grew daily more jealous of the friendship between Florence and Venice, which he regarded as a breach of the Triple Alliance. At length Pope and King joined with the Pazzi, who by their riches and influence were the only serious rivals of the Medici in Florence, in a conspiracy for the murder of Lorenzo and Giuliano dei Medici. During High Mass in the Cathedral at Florence, on Easter Day, 1478, the attempt took place. Giuliano fell before the assassins, but Lorenzo succeeded in escaping to the sacristy, and in so doing he rendered the conspiracy worse than useless. Not only did Lorenzo live to reap the fruits of the outburst of affection towards the Medici, which followed this attempt to destroy them, but the death of his popular brother, Giuliano, concentrated the power in his own hands. In the eyes of Sixtus IV. Lorenzo had committed an unpardonable offence in not being murdered, an offence which the Pope proceeded to punish by an open attack on Florence in conjunction with Naples. For the ruler of Milan the situation was delicate in the extreme. The League of 1474, between Venice, Milan and Florence, pledged the two former Powers to support the Medici. Yet now Milan could only do this at the cost of a rupture with Naples. True to his Guelphic traditions, Simonetta resolved to abide by the League of 1474, and Gian Giacomo Trivulzio was despatched, with a Milanese contingent, to the aid of Florence.

The Sforza brothers and their Ghibelline friends thereupon threw themselves on the side of Naples. Although they could not place the forces of the Duchy at Ferrante's disposal, they at least enabled him to incapacitate Milan as an enemy. Thus Milan, who might have acted as a mediator between Naples and Florence, served rather to widen the breach, owing to her internal dissensions, which were, in their turn, accentuated by the quarrels of her neighbours.

Those who wished to deal a blow at Milan found a weapon ready to hand in the city of Genoa. In the summer of 1478 Philippe de Commines halted, on his way to Florence, to invest Gian Galeazzo with Genoa as a fief of France. This, however, could not prevent Ferrante of Naples from inciting the restless Genoese to fresh rebellion. Aided by the Sforza brothers, Ferrante persuaded Prospero Adorno to throw off the Milanese yoke and to make common cause with the Fregosi. Roberto San Severino, who returned from France to lead the rebel army, inflicted a crushing defeat upon the Milanese force, which Simonetta had sent to subdue Genoa. Corio lays stress upon the loss which the Milanese troops suffered through Simonetta's recent dismissal of their captain, Ambrosino da Longagnana. Yet there had been trouble in Galeazzo's reign over Longagnana's high-handed interference with justice and his arbitrary arrests. Hence Simonetta's action was not prompted merely by the party spirit to which Corio attributes it. If, moreover, the blame of the defeat may in any degree be laid upon Simonetta, his wisdom did much to neutralise its effects. Feeling that it was impossible to hold Genoa, he contrived that Milan should recognise her independence with good grace. Bona was persuaded to yield the Castelletto to Battistino Fregoso, who, on being made Doge, expelled Prospero Adorno as well as the more violent members of his own family, and assumed a friendly attitude towards the Milanese Government. Yet Ferrante had so far achieved his object as to deprive Florence of effective support from Milan during the first campaign of the Pazzi War. In the campaign which was to follow, Sixtus IV. provided employment for the Milanese forces by persuading the Swiss to descend upon Lombardy. Regardless of their recent

treaties, Swiss troops poured over the S. Gotthard to attack Bellinzona in November, 1478. They were repulsed by the Milanese garrison, under Marsiglio Torello, who then headed an expedition up the Val Leventina, in the hope of driving the invaders across the Alps. The Swiss, however, knew how to seize the advantages of mountain warfare. While the Milanese troops marched up the valley, their mules took fright at the stones which were rolled down from the mountains by the hidden foe. When the confusion was at its height, the Swiss appeared and completely routed Torello's force. Many of those who were not killed in the struggle met their death by drowning in the Ticino, and only a handful of the eight hundred Lombards engaged made good their escape to Bellinzona. Simonetta and his colleagues were under no delusions as to the real instigators of this attack, and peace with Ferrante and the Pope was the first proposal of the Secret Council for dealing with the crisis. This scheme Simonetta pronounced to be impossible "on account of the King's bad disposition".¹ He decided instead to call in the Marquis of Mantua, who, having repulsed a Swiss attack upon Lugano, eventually made peace in April, 1479.

Meanwhile the Sforza brothers had been growing daily more open in their championship of Ferrante and more determined to gain a footing in Milan. Early in 1479 Sforza and Lodovico broke the boundaries within which they had been confined to join San Severino and the Fregosi in the Lunigiana. They opened proceedings with an attack upon Pisa, and throughout the year their operations on the frontiers between Milan and Florence weakened the forces of the League at the main seat of war. In August Sforza died, and Lodovico succeeded him both as Duke of Bari and as leader of the party of opposition to Simonetta. Now that he could act solely in his own interests, Lodovico threw discretion to the winds. Accompanied by San Severino, he descended by an unfrequented mountain pass into the valley of the Po and appeared before Tortona. When Lodovico announced that he had come to rescue his nephew from the clutches of Bona and Simonetta, Tortona opened her gates to him with shouts of "*Viva duca*".

¹ Del Giudice, *op. cit.*

Simonetta made a final attempt to crush his enemies, only to discover that a large party in Milan regarded Lodovico, not as a rebel but as a benefactor. Men such as Pusterla, Landriano, Borromeo, members of the Ducal Council and of the leading families in Milan, besought Bona to come to terms with her brother-in-law, in order to deprive the hated Calabrian of his authority. Bona, moreover, had a grievance of her own against Simonetta, who had freely expressed his disapproval of her intimacy with Antonio Tassino. A youth of humble origin, whom Galeazzo had employed as his carver, Tassino's curling locks and handsome figure had charmed Bona to the pitch of infatuation. Egged on by this favourite and by Lodovico's devoted ally, Beatrice, the widow of Tristano Sforza, Bona determined to take the initiative. In a fit of rashness, not uncommon in a weak personality who, in all ordinary circumstances, relies upon the judgment of others, Bona caused Lodovico to be admitted into the Castello of Milan by a garden door. Before Simonetta knew aught of what was happening, she had placed herself in Sforza's power. "It was a marvellous thing," says Rosmini, "that the reconciliation between the Duke of Milan and the Duke of Bari took place without Simonetta, hitherto the author and soul of all deliberations, having any knowledge or suspicion of it."¹ Tassino's influence had achieved what the Ghibelline nobility had failed to do. Thus it came about that "the weakness of a woman and the fine figure of a steward made greater changes in the destiny of Milan than a mighty monarch or a conqueror".² Yet it is easy to mistake occasion for cause. The Tassino incident only put the match to a fire for which the materials had been gradually collected by party factions in Milan and by jealousies between the States of Italy. Once the deed was done, Cecco Simonetta could only make the best of the situation by welcoming Lodovico with every mark of favour. Yet he knew that his fall was at hand. "Most illustrious Duchess," he said to Bona, "I shall lose my head, and you, ere long, will lose the State." The prophecy was all too literally fulfilled.

Lodovico's reconciliation with Bona took place on 7th

¹ Rosmini, C., *Storia di Milano*, vol. iii., p. 82.

² Corio,

September. Three days later the Ghibellines rose in arms, declaring that there could be no security for Lodovico or themselves so long as Cecco Simonetta remained at large. Officially, Lodovico had no part in this movement, and he even went to the length of asking his supporters to lay aside their weapons. Yet there is every reason to suppose that he was the true instigator of the rising. It was, at any rate, with no reluctance that he yielded to the importunity of the Ghibellines and sent Cecco and his brother, Giovanni, prisoners to Pavia. After a year's imprisonment the old man of seventy, who had spent his best years in loyal service to the House of Sforza, perished on the scaffold. Not so long ago, when the tide of fortune was flowing in Simonetta's favour, Lodovico had written to him from exile: "I beg you not to forget that I was the son of Duke Francesco and that you were his loyal servant, so that it would be small honour to either of us to offend the other".¹ Now Lodovico sent Simonetta to his death, and Bona, whom as a helpless widow Cecco had preserved on the throne of Milan, wrote to the French King of his execution as a matter for general rejoicing. Giovanni Simonetta's life was spared in consideration of his merits as a historian, and more especially of his panegyric of Francesco Sforza. He was relegated to Vercelli, from whence after a few years' exile he returned to Milan.

Neither Bona nor the leading Ghibellines were allowed long in which to enjoy their triumph over Simonetta. Ascanio Sforza had followed his brother back to Milan where for some months he enjoyed considerable popularity and influence as Archbishop of Pavia and Papal Legate. Lodovico, however, would have no rivals in his newly won supremacy. In the spring of 1480 Ascanio was relegated to Ferrara, while Pietro Pusterla, Borromeo and other of the nobles who had helped to bring Lodovico into Milan were deprived of their offices. Meanwhile Tassino, realising that his own overthrow would only be postponed so long as Bona remained the chief power in the State, was doing his utmost to strengthen his position in the Castello. His personal friends, men "who would do any

¹ Beltrami, *Castello di Milano*, Letter of July, 1477.

mischievous at his least nod," filled the chief military and civil offices, until Tassino's authority became greater than that of the Castellan. Only in the Rocchetta, or inner fortress, Filippo degli Eustachi remained faithful to the commands of the late Duke and would yield his charge to none until Gian Galeazzo should attain his majority. Tassino made it his chief object to oust Eustachi in favour of his own father, Gabriele. Before he could achieve this final triumph Lodovico Sforza thought fit to interfere. Acting in conjunction with Eustachi, Lodovico contrived to transfer the young Duke and his brother from the Corte Ducale to the Rocchetta. Thus Bona was separated from her children, and with the loss of the Duke's person went the loss of all real authority in the State. Tassino immediately left Milan, while Bona could only write to the Duke of Ferrara commending her favourite to him and deploring the circumstances which rendered his departure necessary. "We have always found him (Tassino) faithful and studious of our comfort and honour," runs the letter, "nevertheless, it is necessary for us to adapt ourselves to the conditions of the time and to the will of the majority."¹ Once within the Rocchetta, the twelve-year-old Duke was pronounced old enough to dispense with his mother's Regency. Lodovico Sforza, Roberto San Severino and Pallavicino constituted themselves his guardians, adding the name of Filippo Sforza to their number. In a letter which describes the fall of Tassino, Gian Galeazzo expressly states that the episode had in nowise detracted from his mother's honour, and that he would continue to consult her in all affairs of State. Nevertheless, Bona was forced to subscribe to conditions which rendered her position in the Government merely nominal. She must give a written promise not to bear malice towards Lodovico and his supporters, nor to seek in any way to injure them. She must be content to leave her son in the Rocchetta and to receive only occasional visits from him. She must allow an inventory to be made of the doors of the Treasury, which would be fitted with six keys, one for the Duke, one for the Duchess, and four for the newly appointed guardians. Finding her position intolerable, Bona resolved,

¹ Letter of 11th Oct., 1480. Cf. Rosmini, vol. iv., p. 178.

in November, 1480, to quit Milan for Savoy. She was not allowed to proceed farther than Abbiategrasso, where she was detained by order of Lodovico Sforza. "We are a prisoner," she writes in May, 1482, "deprived of our liberty, ill-treated and outraged by that iniquitous and perfidious Signor Lodovico."¹ During her son's life-time, Bona remained in the Milanese, enjoying a pension of twenty-five thousand ducats a year. Soon after Gian Galeazzo's death she migrated to France, where she was still living in 1506. Bona of Savoy, pious, foolish, emotional, represented a type of woman who, at a time of political crisis, could not fail to bring disaster upon herself and her friends. Under more favourable circumstances her life, enlivened by an occasional flirtation, would have centred round her religion, her clothes and her children, while her qualities as a wife and mother and her amiable disposition would have carried her across the stage of history with some degree of credit. Yet fate had from the first marked her as its victim. The husband who was suggested as an alternative to Galeazzo Maria Sforza was Edward IV. of England. The shifting of the scene from Milan to England and the substitution of Richard of Gloucester for Lodovico Sforza as the villain of the piece, would not have materially altered the circumstances of Bona's tragedy.

For a few months after Bona's flight, documents of State were for the most part signed by Gian Galeazzo alone, but early in 1481 his name appears in conjunction with that of his uncle. From henceforth no attempt was made to disguise the fact that Lodovico Sforza was the real ruler of Milan. Born at Vigevano in 1451, Lodovico Maria was the fourth son of Francesco and Bianca Sforza. He was known from childhood by the nickname of *Il Moro*, which he himself perpetuated by adopting the mulberry and the Moor's head as his devices. Many ingenious attempts have been made to account for the name, and it has only lately been made clear that Lodovico was called *Il Moro* for the simple reason that his second name was originally *Maurus*. When he was five years old, however, he became seriously ill, and his mother, wishing to place him under

¹ Beltrami, *Castello di Milano*.

the protection of the Blessed Virgin, changed Maurus into Maria.¹ Yet a nickname once acquired is not easily lost. Lodovico remained Il Moro, and the mulberry-tree proved as fertile a theme for the artists and poets of Milan as did the laurel for the admirers of Lorenzo dei Medici. According to Simonetta, Lodovico had always been the clever boy of the family, and Duke Francesco had once prophesied that the child would live to make his mark in the world. The fact that Lodovico was chosen when only thirteen to head the contingent of Milanese troops which were to aid Pius II. in the crusade of 1464, is doubtless a sign of his father's favour. On Francesco's death Lodovico was living at Cremona, where he studied with his tutor and gained some experience of government by hearing the complaints of the citizens. During the earlier part of Galeazzo's reign he was employed in various affairs of State. Galeazzo's will of 1471, placing Lodovico next in the succession to his own sons, shows the cordial relations which existed between the two brothers. Yet Galeazzo would run no risk of seeing his dominions divided among his brothers, and they, growing tired of being employed in small matters alone, decided to leave the Court. Thus the news of Galeazzo's murder reached Lodovico in France whence he returned to win at all costs his way to power. From the point of view of ability, two of the Sforza Dukes of Milan stand out head and shoulders above the other four. Francesco and Lodovico were both men of genius, although their genius showed itself in very divergent ways. If Francesco were a born warrior, Lodovico, the refined and cultivated child of the Renaissance, was no less an adept in the arts of peace. In diplomacy, in intrigue, in schemes for the development of his dominions, or to put it briefly, in all that concerned the intellect alone, Lodovico had few rivals. Nevertheless, Francesco has on the whole the better claim to greatness. Whereas the man of action learned in the course of his chequered career to become a statesman, Il Moro was never able to overcome the moral cowardice which rendered his brilliant intellectual qualities useless at the moment of crisis.

¹ Dina, A., *Lodovico Il Moro prima della sua venuta al governo*. Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1886.

Il Moro's rise to power immediately produced a change in the foreign policy of Milan by renewing the alliance with Naples. Strange as it may seem when viewed in the light of future developments, King Ferrante looked upon Lodovico as his especial protégé. On the death of Sforza Ferrante hastened to invest Lodovico with the Neapolitan fief of Bari, and in the autumn of 1479 he wrote to Filippo Sforza begging him to aid his brother in making himself master of Milan, so that the Duchy might be saved from the ruin which Simonetta would inevitably bring upon it. Ferrante pleaded the approaching marriage of his grand-daughter Isabella to Gian Galeazzo Sforza as an excuse for his interest in the internal affairs of Milan. Now Il Moro made it his first care to procure the ratification of this betrothal, which would place the friendship between Milan and Naples upon a sure basis. At the same time, Lodovico's own betrothal incidentally brought him into closer connection with the Court of Naples. Bound together by their common opposition to the encroachments of Venice, the relations between the Houses of Este and Sforza had for long been cordial. Two marriage alliances had already been concluded between them, when Lodovico proposed to marry Isabella, the eldest daughter of Duke Ercole. She, however, had already been promised to Francesco Gonzaga, and the Duke of Ferrara suggested as an alternative his second daughter, Beatrice, who was only a year younger than her sister. Isabella and Beatrice were the daughters of that Leonora of Aragon who had originally been betrothed to Sforza, Duke of Bari, and who had ultimately married the Duke of Ferrara. A few years earlier the two children had been taken to Naples to visit their maternal grandfather, King Ferrante. From that time Beatrice had remained at Naples, being treated by the old King as his adopted child. Thus Il Moro agreed readily enough to the new arrangement, which achieved his purpose with regard to Ferrara while it strengthened the bond of union between himself and Ferrante of Naples. Meanwhile Lorenzo dei Medici's visit to Naples healed the breach which had resulted from the Pazzi War, and the Triple Alliance once more became the predominating factor in Italian politics. A return to the

conditions which had existed before the League of 1474 naturally found little favour with the Venetians, and they did their best to cause trouble in the Milanese by means of an alliance with the Swiss. Thanks, however, to the mediation of France, Il Moro was able to forestall them. In May, 1480, public rejoicings took place in Milan in celebration of the two betrothals and of a "perpetual peace, league and confederation" with the Swiss.

As the year 1480 drew to its close, Il Moro might well congratulate himself upon the success of his *coup d'état*. Not eighteen months ago he was a penniless adventurer.¹ Now all those who might challenge his supremacy in Milan had been swept from his path, while the chief powers of Italy had shown their readiness to accept him as the virtual ruler of the Duchy. It was not long, however, before fresh troubles were brought about by Lodovico's sometime adherent Roberto San Severino. The man who had shared Il Moro's exile, and whose arms had aided his rise to power, naturally expected to share in his triumph. Yet Lodovico, no less than Philippe de Commynes, realised that "*deux gros personnages ne se peuvent endurer*," and he was not prepared to allow San Severino more than a very limited amount of authority. Hence a quarrel ensued which ended in Roberto appearing before the Council in September, 1481, to demand an increase of his salary as captain. His request being refused, he left Milan in anger to shut himself up in his fortress at Castelnovo. San Severino then proceeded to intrigue with Obietto Fiesco and the enemies of the Sforza in Genoa, until Costanzo Sforza besieged him at Castelnovo and forced him to fly to Venice. Costanzo Sforza, Lord of Pesaro, had followed the family profession, and was at this time a *condottiere* in the service of his Milanese cousins. He had orders to proceed from Castelnovo to the neighbourhood of Parma, where Pier Maria Rossi was holding some twenty-two castles against the Milanese Government. Costanzo had hoped to work on the ancient friendship of the Rossi for Francesco Sforza to effect a reconciliation, but Pier Maria would

¹ Lodovico and Sforza were deprived of their pension from Milan when they broke bounds in 1479.

listen to no overtures from a Government in which his Pallavicini rivals were influential. He refused to obey a summons to Milan and prepared to make an effective resistance to Costanzo by seeking aid from Venice.

Meanwhile fresh war was brewing beyond the frontiers of the Duchy. The ambitions of Girolamo Riario had only been increased by his recent acquisition of Forlì, and they now soared as high as Ferrara, which was certainly a papal fief, but a fief over which the Pope exercised the most nominal control. Venice also had her ambitions with regard to Ferrara and her grievances against the House of Este. In spite of the monopoly claimed by the Venetian salt-works at Cervia, the Duke of Ferrara continued to make salt at Comacchio. The resident judge, whom Venice was privileged to keep in Ferrara to try suits in which Venetian subjects were involved, had recently been excommunicated. Above all, the acquisition of the fertile district known as the Polesina of Rovigo would extend the southern frontiers of Venice from the Adige to the Po. Hence, when Pier Maria Rossi appealed to Venice for aid against Milan, a scheme was already laid for the partition of Ferrara between Venice and the Papacy. The imperial fiefs of Modena and Reggio should fall to the Venetians while Ferrara itself should revert to Sixtus IV., who would doubtless bestow it upon his nephew. Now Venice prepared to send troops in Rossi's support and demanded free passage for them through Ferrarese territory. Ercole d'Este, as the ally of Milan, refused to allow the troops to pass, and in so doing he furnished the Venetians with the desired occasion for declaring war. By May, 1482, hostilities had begun in which all the five Powers were involved. Venice and the Papacy combined for the overthrow of the Duke of Ferrara while the Triple Alliance took arms in his defence.

The War of Ferrara came to the Italian soldiers of fortune as a windfall. War was waged round several distinct centres, and there was hardly a *condottiere* of repute who did not find employment. Roberto San Severino, who at once received a *condotta* from the Venetians, began operations by seizing Ficarolo, which gave him the passage of the Po. Federico of

Urbino was made Captain-General of the Triple Alliance and his troops protected Ferrara, although they could not prevent San Severino from occupying the Polesina. Meanwhile Alfonso of Calabria, at the head of the Neapolitan contingent, appeared within a few miles of Rome, and the Pope, in alarm, sent post-haste for the Venetian Captain-General Roberto Malatesta. Costanzo Sforza had been taken into Florentine service, and he carried through an isolated episode of the war by wresting Città di Castello from the Papacy. In the Parma district, Pier Maria Rossi was active, having received, it is said, a substantial sum from Venice in order that he might harass the Duke of Milan. These various campaigns produced heavy losses on both sides, although marsh fevers proved more formidable foes than the forces of the enemy. In August Malatesta inflicted a crushing defeat on Alfonso of Calabria at Campo Morto, but before he had time to follow up his victory he succumbed to the unhealthy climate of the Campagna and died at Rome. Almost at the same time Federico of Urbino was forced to leave his camp among the marshes of the Po, to breathe his last at Rimini. So died two of the most prominent *condottieri* of their day. True to the instinct of brotherhood which bound mercenary to mercenary, each was found to have made the other the guardian of his children and lands. Meanwhile the death of Pier Maria Rossi, in September, helped to end the trouble round Parma. Rossi's illegitimate son, Beltramo, joined hands with Milan against his brother, and Guido, who had succeeded to his father's policy, found himself unable to resist the double attack. In October he made his peace with the Government, sending his son to Milan as a guarantee for his good behaviour. Before the year was out, however, the Duke of Ferrara was reduced to the most desperate straits. San Severino defeated the Ferrarese and Milanese forces at Argenta, sending some three hundred prisoners to Venice, while his son Fracasso approached near enough to Ferrara to plant the standard of S. Mark in the ducal park. At the same time the city was ravaged by plague, and the Duke himself lay dangerously ill in the Castello. Thanks to the loyalty of the citizens and to Lodovico Sforza's timely aid,

the crisis was tided over until the winter of 1482 brought unexpected relief.

Sixtus IV. had embarked on the war as a means of strengthening his territorial power in Romagna. He perceived, ere long, that Venice was the predominant partner in the newly formed alliance, and that Venice and not the Papacy would reap the fruits of victory. Moreover, a new conciliar movement was maturing at Basel, which Milan and Florence hastened to support as a means of bringing the Pope to reason. Fear of Venice and fear of a Council together produced a somersault in the Papal policy. In December Sixtus IV. made peace with the Triple Alliance, leaving Venice to carry on the struggle single-handed. More than this, when the allied powers met at Cremona in February, 1483, a scheme was mooted for the partition of Venetian territory which forestalled the League of Cambrai. Yet while her enemies divided her possessions among themselves, Venice made use of weapons which were calculated to cause anxiety to the rulers of Naples and Milan, if not to their allies. René of Lorraine became Captain-General of the Venetian forces, on the understanding that Venice would aid him to enforce his rights over Naples which he claimed as the grandson of René of Anjou. At the same time Roberto San Severino got across the Adda and attacked the Milanese, while a happy chance alone saved Il Moro from becoming the victim of a conspiracy which was inspired and nourished by Venice. The ostensible object of the conspiracy was the restoration to power of Bona and her son. The fatal deed was planned for S. Ambrose Day, 1483, when the drama of 1476 would be repeated, and Il Moro would be killed as he entered the basilica of S. Ambrose to hear Mass in honour of the saint. When the moment came, Lodovico entered the church by a side door in order to avoid the crowd, and Luigi da Vimercate, who was told off to kill him on his return to the Castello, if the first attempt should fail, was discovered with a naked dagger in his hand. Vimercate died a traitor's death, and Il Moro's position in Milan was if anything strengthened. Meanwhile Alfonso of Calabria, no longer hampered in his passage by the papal forces, could march on

Lombardy. Having first defeated the Venetians at Argenta, he drove San Severino from the Milanese.

Early in 1484 the allies met for another congress in the Castello of Milan where campaigns were planned for the following spring. Yet Venice had a trump-card to play of which the mere production proved the cause of peace. She took the bold step of inviting the young King, Charles VIII. of France, to Italy in order that he might further the Angevin cause in Naples and that of the Duke of Orleans in Milan. Il Moro had every cause to fear French intervention in Italy at this juncture. At the outset of the war, Sixtus IV. had proposed that Louis XI. should take steps to restore Bona to her rightful position in Milan as the only means of saving Gian Galeazzo from the clutches of his uncle. Louis XI. had contented himself with demanding that Bona should receive her pension, and that she should be treated with all due honour, "without in any way detracting from the authority which Signor Lodovico has in the State of Milan".¹ Yet the indignation of Anne of Beaujeu at the treatment to which Bona had been subjected was so well known that the Milanese ambassador hardly dared to appear at the French Court to congratulate Charles VIII. on his accession. At the same time the pretensions of the Duke of Orleans and the presence of a French garrison in Asti were a perpetual menace to the authority of the Sforza in Milan. Besides his fear of France, the growing coolness between himself and Alfonso of Calabria rendered Lodovico anxious for peace. Alfonso had begun to make unpleasant remarks about the state of tutelage in which his future son-in-law, Gian Galeazzo, was still kept, and Il Moro looked forward to the day when this dangerous ally should turn his back on Lombardy. Hence Lodovico Sforza was largely instrumental in procuring the Peace of Bagnolo in August, 1484, which, as its terms plainly show, was forced upon the other Powers after private negotiations between Milan and Venice. The acquisition of the Polesina and the recognition of her rights with regard to Ferrara gave to Venice all that she had taken arms to obtain, and it was commonly

¹ Cf. Rosmini, vol. iv., p. 221.

reported that Il Moro received 60,000 ducats as the price of his mediation. Be that as it may, when San Severino had made peace with Milan and when the Rossi were reduced to submission, the problems which had drawn Lodovico into the contest were satisfactorily solved. The Pope and Riario, on the other hand, had gained nothing by the war. Sixtus IV. branded the Peace of Bagnolo as "shameful and ignominious". So great was the Pope's wrath that his death, a few days after the peace was proclaimed, was commonly attributed to the access of fury with which he greeted the news.

During the years which followed the War of Ferrara, Lodovico Sforza found ample scope for his ingenuity as a diplomatist. With Milan firmly in his grasp and with the five States leagued together for the preservation of their dominions, Il Moro only wished to maintain the *status quo* and to avoid any disturbance which might be the cause of foreign intervention. Unfortunately, there were restless spirits in Rome and Naples who did not share his pacific disposition. The new Pope, Innocent VIII., was persuaded by Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere to revive the papal claim to tribute from the Kings of Naples and to reverse his predecessor's policy of conciliation and friendship towards the Aragonese dynasty. As of old, the Pope found willing allies among the Neapolitan barons who were growing daily more restless under the overbearing rule of Ferrante and his son. Alfonso's head had been turned by his successes in the War of Ferrara, and on his imprisonment of one of the leading barons of Aquila the nobility would bear no longer with his cruelty and insolence. The year 1485 saw the Kingdom of Naples in the thick of the Barons' War, with the Pope as the acknowledged leader of the malcontents. Nothing could be more displeasing to Il Moro, for Innocent VIII. of course invited René of Lorraine to Italy, and it seemed likely that the French monarch would encourage him to go, as an easy means of getting rid of a discontented cousin. Hence Lodovico's first step was to implore the Venetians not to allow Roberto San Severino to enter papal service, so that Innocent might at least be deprived of a powerful arm with which to trouble Italy. When, in spite of the promises of Venice, San Severino

assumed the command of the papal troops and Ferrante appealed to Milan for aid, Lodovico still hesitated to take up arms. Lorenzo dei Medici, however, persuaded him that intervention was necessary. Thus he agreed that Niccolò and Virginio Orsini should be employed by Milan and Florence to aid the King of Naples, while, after repeated delays, a Milanese contingent under Gian Giacomo Trivulzio was despatched to the scene of war. It was doubtless in accordance with Il Moro's instructions that Trivulzio chiefly concerned himself in negotiations for the cessation of hostilities. At length, in August, 1486, peace came. Ferrante agreed to pardon the barons and to acknowledge the papal suzerainty, while Milan and Florence guaranteed that he should keep his promises. The fact that Ferrante shamelessly broke every engagement directly the opportunity arose troubled Lodovico not the least. Thanks to his efforts and to those of Lorenzo dei Medici, the war was over before it had become complicated by French intervention, while the aid which he had rendered to Naples helped to patch up the quarrel between himself and Alfonso of Calabria. Hence, in Il Moro's eyes the conclusion was eminently satisfactory, and the mysterious disappearance of the Neapolitan barons was but an incident in Ferrante's internal policy with which the ruler of Milan had no concern. The Barons' War proved to be the last appearance of Roberto San Severino in Italian warfare as he died a year later fighting for Venice in Tyrol. Two of his sons, Francesco, Count of Caiazzo, and Galeazzo, had fled to the Court of the Sforza during the war of Ferrara and had remained since then in Milanese service. So now the body of Il Moro's old comrade was brought to its last resting-place in the church of S. Francesco at Milan.

In their policy with regard to the Neapolitan trouble Lodovico Sforza and Lorenzo dei Medici had been of one mind, and each had profited by the support of the other. Nevertheless, the relations between Milan and Florence were somewhat strained owing to an apple of contention which existed in the town of Sarzana. This important fortress, close to the Ligurian sea-coast, guarded the most frequented route from

Milan to Florence, and both Powers eyed it with watchful jealousy. During the Pazzi War, Sarzana had been seized by the Fregosi who had sold it to the Bank of S. George. Since then Florence had never ceased to agitate for its recovery. In 1484 the Florentines captured Pietrasanta, but it was only in 1487 that Sarzana was regained. Lorenzo rightly suspected Lodovico to be the cause of the delay, while Il Moro on his side did not attempt to conceal his disgust at the successes of Florence. Incidentally, however, they furthered Lodovico's interests with regard to Genoa. Archbishop Paolo Fregoso still continued to be the life and soul of Genoese politics, and he had profited by the general unsettlement to make himself Doge. Now, with the loss of Sarzana, party strife broke out in Genoa with its accustomed violence. The Archbishop, after expatiating on the dangers of a war with Florence and the advantages of Milanese aid, persuaded Genoa to return to the Sforza Protectorate. Yet the presence of the Archbishop in Genoa was not conducive to peace. In 1488 he shut himself up in the Castelletto from whence he waged war against Obietto Fiesco and the Adorni. The Count of Caiazzo was despatched from Milan to restore order, while Lodovico persuaded Archbishop Paolo to yield the fortress and the town of Savona in exchange for an annual revenue of 4,000 ducats. In 1490, when the Archbishop completed his bargain by leaving Genoa for Rome, Il Moro had won a triumph over Genoa which practically amounted to reconquest. Gian Galeazzo received a fresh investiture of Genoa from the French King at the price of 8,000 ducats. This Commynes, with the remembrance of the handsome percentage which he had himself received out of the 50,000 ducats paid in 1478, pronounced to be a wholly unworthy sum. Meanwhile the acquisitions of Genoa had not made matters easier with regard to Milan and Florence. There was now no longer an independent State to act as a buffer between their rival ambitions. At this time Lodovico was suffering considerable embarrassment on the northern frontiers of the Duchy from the aggressions of the Swiss Cantons. In 1487 a body of Swiss occupied Bormio in the Valtellina, while the people of Valais poured over the Simplon to besiege

Domodossola. After stubborn resistance on the part of the Swiss both attacks were repulsed. They served to show, however, the ambitions of the Cantons with regard to Lombardy, which were, at no very distant date, to become of vital importance in the history of Milan.

The year 1488 is famous in the annals of the Sforza on account of Caterina Sforza's heroic defence of the fortress at Forlì against her husband's murderers. Girolamo Riario had never found favour in Forlì, and his attempt to win popularity by remitting the taxes on the peasantry only incensed the citizens against him. In April, 1488, he fell a victim to some malcontent courtiers, Lodovico and Cecco Orsi, who with the aid of a couple of soldiers contrived to murder Girolamo in his private apartments, where he was resting after his evening meal. Caterina and her children were taken as prisoners to the house of the Orsi, but not before she had sent appeals for help to Bologna and Milan and had commanded the Castellan to hold the fortress at all costs. Her promptness stood her in good stead, for the Castellan refused to yield unless Caterina herself should command him to do so. With a view to securing their ends, the Orsi allowed Caterina to enter the fortress for a private conference with the Castellan. Once within its walls she raised the Sforza standard and waged war on the town. Her children had been detained as hostages by the Orsi, but even the threats to murder them before her eyes could not move her. She continued to hold out until, in a fortnight's time, an army of some 12,000 men, led by Galeazzo San Severino and Giovanni Bentivoglio, came to her relief. Thereupon the Orsi fled, Caterina's son Ottaviano was proclaimed Lord of Forlì, and on 30th April this worthy daughter of a fighting race became the virtual ruler of the city. All Italy rang with the news of her triumph, and when Galeazzo San Severino returned to Milan with a somewhat easily won reputation, he was made Captain-General of the ducal armies. The favour which Il Moro bestowed on this brilliant tournament winner had for some time excited the jealousy of older men. Now Gian Giacomo Trivulzio regarded his preferment as a slight on himself. He departed in a huff for Naples, having

vowed perpetual enmity towards the race of Sforza in general and towards Lodovico in particular.

The reign of Gian Galeazzo produced considerable developments in the government and administration of Milan. Corio's mention of the summons of two Councils or Senates at the opening of the reign has led to the assumption that these Councils were the creation of Simonetta. It does not appear, however, that they differed in any way from the Council of Justice and the Secret Council, which had their origin under Gian Galeazzo Visconti at the latest, and which had been revived on the accession of Francesco Sforza. Hence Corio's words can only refer to a reform of the members of the Councils, to the summons, that is, of a new set of men, who would render effective support to Bona's Government. Yet, although no change took place in its constitution, the importance of the Secret Council reached its zenith under Simonetta's regime. The Council met almost every day, sometimes in the afternoon as well as in the morning. Practically the whole business of internal administration as well as matters of external politics were laid before it. So numerous were its functions that it showed a tendency to split into two separate bodies. The Secret Council of the Castello, consisting of not more than ten members, became the true organ of the executive, while the larger body, spoken of as the Secret Council at the Court of Arengo, was only occasionally consulted on political matters.¹ With the rise to power of Lodovico, however, the development of the Secret Council received a check. Little more is heard of the Inner Council of the Castello, and although the Secret Council at the Arengo continued to exist, its political importance was superseded by that of the Secretaries of State. Of these, the chief was Bartolomeo Calco, Secretary for Foreign Affairs, who had special clerks under him for France, Venice and other States, with which Milan was in frequent communication. Calco it was who opened the diplomatic despatches and determined their answers, submitting only the more important documents to Lodovico. He, too, arranged for the reception of foreign ambassadors in Milan, while he acted as

¹ Del Giudice, *op. cit.*

the means of communication between the home Government and the Milanese ambassadors abroad. There were besides three other secretaries, each with his own apartments in the Castello and with his especial sphere of influence. Jacopo Antiquario controlled the ecclesiastical affairs of Milan, Giovanni da Bellinzona was Secretary for Justice, and Jacopo Terufino Secretary for Finance. This system of secretaries concentrated the power in Lodovico's own hands, and formed part of his general policy of filling the chief offices of State with men dependent on himself alone, to the exclusion of all possible rivals. Hence the decline of the Council, which was composed of men drawn from the leading families of Milan, whom Il Moro was least anxious to trust. After the Diet of Cremona, for example, Lodovico conferred with the Council as to the advisability of embarking on a fresh campaign against Venice, but its share in matters of State depended entirely on the will of the ruler who consulted it or not "as it appeared to him the circumstances and cases deserved".¹

In 1489 the last rival to Lodovico's authority was removed in the person of Filippo degli Eustachi. He was lured from the Rocchetta by a ruse, to be seized by the San Severini and imprisoned at Abbiategrasso on the charge of having agreed to cede the Castello of Milan to the Emperor. Eustachi's disgrace left Il Moro in possession of the Rocchetta, and Commynes is probably right when he hints that the accusation of treachery was merely a convenient method of attaining this end. Lodovico was now at the height of his power. The ducal revenues amounted to between six and seven hundred thousand ducats, and although some considered this excessive, in view of the increasing prosperity of Milan the Duchy was probably not over-taxed. This prosperity was in great measure due to Il Moro's wise economic policy and especially to his irrigation works which did much to enhance the productive power of his dominions. Meanwhile Gian Galeazzo had grown up weak both in mind and body. "The aforesaid Duke was not very wise,"² forms the opinion of a contemporary chronicler.

¹ Del Giudice.

² Porto, Venere G., *Memoriale come il Re di Francia passa in Italia*. Arch. Stor. Ital., vi., 2.

Under such circumstances there is little wonder that he remained a passive instrument in the hands of Il Moro, or that in verse, in epigram and in art alike Lodovico Sforza was represented both as the guardian of Milan and as the arbiter of Italy.

From the outset of his career in Milan Il Moro spared no pains to gather round him men of genius of every kind, who flocked to his Court as "bees seek honey" until Milan was transformed into a new Athens. The Court poet, Bernardo Bellincione, addressed one of his sonnets to "four illustrious men who have grown up under the shadow of Il Moro". Their names will serve as an illustration of the generous patronage which Lodovico bestowed upon every form of culture. With the learned classical scholar and historian, Giorgio Merula, are joined the goldsmith, Caradosso, who was largely employed by Il Moro both as a craftsman and as a collector of antiques, "Maestro Giannino, the Ferrarese gun-founder," and the great Florentine, Leonardo da Vinci. The arrival of Leonardo da Vinci gave to the Court of Milan not only a unique artist but a brilliant addition to its society. "Leonardo was so pleasing in conversation that he drew the souls of men towards himself," is Vasari's verdict, and his great beauty and charming manners further increased his power of attraction. Hence the Court hung upon his fables and satires; his epigrams were on every one's lips. He discussed pure mathematics with Luca Pacioli, Galeazzo San Severino consulted him on military questions, while he joined in the conferences upon philosophy and literature conducted by Il Moro and other kindred spirits of the Court.

If Milan were the home of talent, it was no less the home of splendour. In January, 1489, Isabella of Aragon came to Milan as a bride, and the festivities which attended her wedding were conspicuous even in the Renaissance for their magnificence and ingenuity. Ermete Sforza, the Duke's brother, went to Naples with a suite of some four hundred persons "clad like so many kings," from whence he escorted Isabella by sea to Genoa. The meeting between the bridal pair took place at Tortona, and was celebrated by a banquet at which each course

was served by mythological characters in appropriate costume. Fish was handed round by naiads. Jason bore in the Golden Fleece. Hebe produced wines which rivalled nectar and ambrosia in their preciousness. Orpheus offered birds which, he declared in elegant verse, had flocked round him to hear the melodies which he had raised in praise of Isabella of Aragon. The wedding itself took place in the Duomo at Milan to the accompaniment of fresh pageants, and the festivities were crowned by the performance of a masque called *Il Paradiso*, written for the occasion by Bellincione and organised by Leonardo. Two years later there was another round of gaiety in honour of Il Moro's wedding, which took place in the Castello of Pavia on 17th January, 1491. The *pièce de résistance* on this occasion was a tournament in which Galeazzo San Severino as usual remained the victor, and received the *pallium* of gold brocade from the bride's hands in a costume which Leonardo had designed for him.

With the advent of Beatrice d'Este the Court of Milan gained a touch of charm without which its cultured splendour would have been incomplete. This sixteen-year-old bride possessed to the full the art of enjoyment, and the zest with which she threw herself into every entertainment that arose could not but be infectious. Il Moro was completely captivated by his young wife, whose gay vivacity formed a refreshing contrast to his thoughtful and somewhat melancholy disposition. Many were the letters which he wrote to his sister-in-law, Isabella Gonzaga, dwelling with mingled amusement and pride on his wife's doings.¹ "My wife is so good at hawking," runs one letter, "that she surpasses me entirely." Not content with this comparatively mild form of sport, Beatrice also joined in the pursuit of such big game as boars, deer and wolves. On one occasion she was placed in considerable danger by a wounded stag who turned on her horse and made it rear violently. Beatrice, however, preserved both her courage and her seat, and when the rest of the party rushed to

¹ Cf. Luzio-Renier, *Delle Relazioni di Isabella d'Este Gonzaga con Lodovico e Beatrice Sforza*. Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1890.

her rescue they found her laughing over the adventure. In another letter Lodovico describes Beatrice and Isabella of Aragon going out into the city with some of their ladies to masquerade as housewives in quest of provisions. This mad freak went very near to producing serious consequences. The scarves which they wore on their heads being strange to the eye of the Milanese, some women began to make rude remarks at their expense. Beatrice returned the compliment with interest, and they narrowly escaped coming to blows. With all her love of a frolic Beatrice d'Este was no irresponsible child, to whom amusement was the end of existence. She was fitted both by education and taste to share in her husband's intellectual pursuits, and she possessed the force of character to oust Lodovico's mistress, Cecilia Gallerani, from her position at the Court within three months of his marriage. This accomplished lady was, moreover, a keen politician, and as time went on her tact and power of rising to the occasion proved of no small value to her husband.

So the merry life flowed on and only one discordant note could be heard among the general harmony. Gradually, however, this note waxed louder until the sound of it went nigh to drowning all the rest. The rivalry between Isabella of Aragon and Beatrice d'Este dated from the moment of Beatrice's entry into Milan, when the newly made bride must needs give precedence to the reigning Duchess. It did not cease until it had shaken the very foundations of the Sforza State. A more delicate situation can hardly be conceived. Isabella and Beatrice were first cousins, they were both highly cultivated, strong-willed and ambitious. Isabella was a few years older than Beatrice and as the wife of Gian Galeazzo she naturally expected to be the first lady in Milan. Yet she found herself completely overshadowed by her more brilliant cousin, who, as the wife of Il Moro, held the reins of power and could lord it over her rival in those countless petty ways in which only women can torment one another. The crowning insult came when Beatrice gave birth to a son in January, 1493. Seven months earlier the birth of Isabella's son, Francesco, had only been celebrated by a small tournament, but now little Ercole



A. Ferrario

1. THE VIPER QUARTERED WITH THE IMPERIAL EAGLES



A. Ferrario

2. THE BRUSH (SCOPETTA)

SFORZA ARMS

Certosa of Pavia

was ushered into the world with rejoicings which befitted the birth of the heir to the Duchy.¹ It is small wonder that Isabella grew desperate and resolved henceforth to use every means in her power to overthrow the usurpers.

¹ Portioli, A., *Nascità di Massimiliano Sforza*. Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1882.

CHAPTER VII

LODOVICO SFORZA AND THE FIRST FRENCH INVASION

(1492—1498)

TO the student of Italian history the year 1492 may well seem the beginning of the end—the end, that is, of the independence of the native Italian States, and of the Sforza dynasty in Milan with the rest. Henceforth the Alps served no longer as the natural barrier between Italians and ultramontanes, but became, rather, the highway of European armies. The days of petty local wars and of the maintenance of the balance of power by means of leagues and counter leagues between the chief Italian States were at an end, and Italy was plunged into the vortex of European politics.

The aims which determined the diplomatic relations of Milan in 1492 were those which had been from the first the guiding principles of Sforza's foreign policy. Il Moro, as his father and brother before him, concentrated his energies on the preservation of the Triple Alliance and on the continuance of friendly relations between Milan and France. Yet before the year was out the final breach in the Triple Alliance was already visible, while friendship with France was hurrying the ruler of Milan into a course of action which proved his ultimate destruction. When Gian Galeazzo received the investiture of Genoa, Il Moro was anxious to renew the league with France which had originated under Louis XI. The French ambassadors, however, insisted that Lodovico must first restore three cities which he had taken from the Marquis of Montferrat, with the result that the conclusion of the treaty was deferred for another year. Hence the quarrel between Charles VIII. and Maximilian, King of the Romans, over Anne of Brittany was particularly acceptable to Il Moro. "The Duke thinks," wrote a Florentine

ambassador to Lorenzo dei Medici, "that the King, now that he has quarrelled with Maximilian by rejecting his daughter, will more readily consent to renew the ancient league . . . he supposes that a big war will break out between France and the King of the Romans."¹ Charles VIII. had, indeed, no wish to see Milan on the side of his enemies, and in January, 1492, a fresh embassy crossed the Alps to conclude the desired alliance. Thereupon, Carlo da Barbiano, Count of Belgioioso, was despatched to the French Court as the permanent Milanese ambassador. With him went the Count of Caiazzo and Galeazzo San Severino, nominally in order that they might thank Charles VIII. for his friendly offices towards Milan, and assure him of the entire devotion of his new ally, really in order to strengthen the position of Il Moro at the French Court by a judicious dissemination of bribes. Lodovico had found himself obliged to yield on the question of the Montferrat cities, and this made him the more anxious to impress Charles with the value of the Milanese alliance. Hence Caiazzo received special injunctions to show the French King a letter from Henry VII. of England, warning the Milanese Government of the ambitions of Orleans, and inviting it to share with him in the war with France. In all these negotiations there was no word of a French expedition to Italy. The alliance with Charles VIII., while it gave weight to the position of Milan in Italian politics, was sought by Lodovico as the time-honoured means of keeping the French on their own side of the Alps. Yet Charles VIII. had not inherited his father's pacific policy with regard to Italy. In his eyes the Milanese alliance was a step towards the realisation of long-standing ambitions on the part of the French Crown. Since the days when Asti had first passed to the Duke of Orleans as the dowry of Valentina Visconti, Genoa, Savoy, Saluzzo, Montferrat had come, as it were, within the French sphere of influence. Now, after the death of René of Anjou and his nephew,² Charles VIII. represented in his own person

¹ Delaborde, H. F., *Expédition de Charles VIII. en Italie*, p. 226. Paris, 1888.

² René of Anjou disinherited his grandson, René of Lorraine, and left his possessions to his nephew, Charles of Maine, with remainder to the French Crown,

the Angevin claims to Naples, and he resolved to assert those claims with the armies of France at his back. Jean Cloppet was sent to Milan in September, 1492, and Lodovico, in describing his interview with him to Belgioioso, makes the following remark: "Afterwards he said something to us about the expedition to Naples. On this point," he adds, "I had nothing particular to propose."¹ This is Il Moro's first mention of the Neapolitan expedition. It is clear from his own words that the scheme was distasteful to him, and that he intended to oppose it, in so far as he could do so without offending the French King.

Meanwhile the death of Lorenzo dei Medici in April, 1492, proved no small blow to the peace of Italy and to the maintenance of the Triple Alliance. So long as Lorenzo lived, his influence was always on the side of moderation, and he would have done his utmost to bridge over a rupture between Milan and Naples. Hence the rise to power of Piero dei Medici, a youth of the smallest political capacity, at a time when the relations between the other two members of the Triple Alliance were growing daily more strained, was peculiarly unfortunate. The effect of this change in the government of Florence was realised to the full at the time of Alexander VI.'s election to the Papacy. On the death of Innocent VIII. the papal election lay to all appearance between Ascanio Sforza and Giuliano della Rovere. Ascanio, however, despairing of his own success, determined to keep his rival out by throwing the weight of his influence on the side of a third candidate, Cardinal Borgia. Thanks to Ascanio's efforts and to his own wholesale bribery, Borgia became Pope Alexander VI. He openly acknowledged his indebtedness to Ascanio, making him Vice-Chancellor, and declaring that he would prove the most grateful of Popes towards his Milanese friends. The defeated candidate, Giuliano della Rovere, was at this time in close touch with King Ferrante. Il Moro, anxious to counteract any ill-feeling which might have arisen at Naples over Ascanio's share in the election, proposed that the Triple Alliance should send a joint embassy of congratulation to the new Pope. The fact that the Neapolitan ambassador would, by right of precedence, be the mouthpiece

¹ Delaborde, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

of the others rendered the compliment to Ferrante all the more delicate. Such subtleties were, however, past the comprehension of Piero dei Medici's small brain. In order that the Florentine envoy should not be deprived of the opportunity for delivering a carefully prepared oration, he persuaded Ferrante not to agree to Lodovico's proposal. The members of the Triple Alliance congratulated Alexander VI. separately, and a golden opportunity was lost of strengthening the already loosening bonds between the three Powers.

The birth of Il Moro's son, as has been already noticed, proved too much for Duchess Isabella's powers of endurance. If only for the sake of her child, she resolved to make a desperate bid for the supremacy which was hers only in name. Hence her famous letter to Alfonso of Calabria in which she describes Lodovico as acting in all things as if he and not Gian Galeazzo were the true Duke, while she and her husband were forced to live as private persons. The letter concludes with an appeal to Alfonso to come to the aid of his unhappy daughter. "If you will not help us," it runs, "I would rather die by my own hands than bear this tyrannous yoke and suffer in a strange country under the eyes of a rival."¹ Isabella's appeal fell on soil already prepared to receive it. Since his arrival at the Court of Naples, Gian Giacomo Trivulzio had been loud in the proclamation of her wrongs, and Alfonso, whose enmity towards Lodovico dated from the War of Ferrara, was ready to take arms without more ado in his daughter's defence. Yet such rash measures did not meet with Ferrante's approval. His prudence contrived an embassy to the Court of Milan, which began by thanking Lodovico for his good government of the Duchy during Gian Galeazzo's minority, and then suggested that he should crown his virtues by retiring in his nephew's favour. Il Moro treated the Neapolitan ambassadors with every mark of attention, but his vague reply that secret enemies had yet to be destroyed before he could lay aside the reins of power, was tantamount to a refusal. While, on the one hand, preparations for war with Milan began at Naples, Lodovico, on

¹ Corio. The historian probably composed the letter, although a communication to the same effect passed between Isabella and Naples.

his side, began to seek fresh allies, and to devise means for his own safety.

Il Moro's first measure of defence was the formation of a league between Venice, the Papacy, Milan, Mantua and Ferrara for the preservation of the States of the Church, and for the maintenance of the present Government in Milan. This revolution in Milanese foreign policy was rendered easy by the friendly relations which had existed between Lodovico and the Venetian Signoria since the conclusion of the Peace of Bagnolo. The Pope, moreover, was incensed against Naples and Florence in that their rulers had facilitated the sale of some papal fiefs near Rome by the late Pope's son to Virginio Orsini, regardless of Alexander VI.'s rights. Hence in April, 1493, this novel combination of the Powers was published. Yet Il Moro was at once too clear-sighted and too timid to put great faith in the alliance of either the Pope or Venice. In an unhappy moment, "forgetting," as Corio expresses it, "that God made the mountains as boundaries between ultramontanes and Italians," he bethought him that Charles VIII.'s Neapolitan expedition, which he had hitherto discouraged, might be used for his own ends. "Our influence," wrote Lodovico to Belgioioso in February, 1493, "no longer suffices, the Most Christian King must interpose his."¹ For a few months longer Il Moro continued to fluctuate between his fear of Naples and his fear of France. When in March Charles VIII. asked that Galeazzo San Severino might be sent to France in order to give his advice on certain military matters, Lodovico declined to let him go. In May Il Moro made a final attempt to strengthen himself against Naples independently of French aid, by sending Erasmo Brasca to Germany in order to seek the investiture of Milan at the hands of the Emperor. At the same time it was arranged that Beatrice should pay a complimentary visit to the Venetian Signoria in recognition of their recent alliance. Lodovico accompanied his wife as far as Ferrara, and he had already set out on his homeward journey when Belgioioso passed mysteriously through Milan with news that was to form the turning-point in Il Moro's relations with France. The am-

¹ Delaborde, *op. cit.*

bassador had ridden post-haste from Senlis to tell his master that a treaty had just been concluded between Charles VIII. and Maximilian, in consequence of which the French King had determined to come to Italy without further delay. Lodovico could hesitate no longer. If he continued to oppose the Neapolitan expedition he would do so at the risk of alienating not only Charles VIII. but Maximilian. Hence when the French envoy, Perron de Baschi, proposed that the ruler of Milan should act as the "head and director" of the forthcoming expedition, Lodovico raised no further objections. From henceforth he threw himself unreservedly on the side of the French King. Lodovico's policy during the years 1492-93 is best expressed in his own letter to Ascanio, written in March, 1494.¹ "It is not true that all this movement comes from me. It is the Christian King himself who took the initiative." After dwelling on the Treaty of Senlis, and the offers made to him by Charles VIII. through Belgioioso and Perron, he continues: "At this time, I do not deny that, in view of the evil proceedings of the King of Naples towards the Holy Father, it did not displease me to find an occasion for coming to the aid of His Holiness. Hence I ceased to dissuade the most Christian King from his enterprise, I even approved of his resolution, and since then he has persisted in it with so much warmth that here he is to-day at Lyons." The French alliance had, in short, produced results which Lodovico had not anticipated. He had hoped to find in Charles VIII. an ally "docile enough to serve his designs and powerful enough to ensure their success".² Charles, however, and not Lodovico had proved the dominant partner of the alliance, and the latter could only make the most of a situation into which he had been almost irresistibly drawn.

Belgioioso's ride from Senlis greatly enhanced the importance of Beatrice's mission to Venice. To her now fell the task of sounding the Signoria as to the attitude of the Republic towards the expected invasion. Throughout the previous negotiations Venice had played a waiting game. In her profound

¹ Roma, Archivio di Stato, *Potenze Estere*. Cf. Delaborde, *op. cit.*

² Delaborde, p. 262.

egoism she cared nothing for keeping the foreigner out of Italy, so long as her own mainland possessions remained intact. If she had thrown herself whole-heartedly into the alliance with Milan and the Papacy in April, Lodovico would have been in a position to discourage Charles VIII.'s advances. Her refusal to do so, in the eyes of a modern writer,¹ throws the moral responsibility for the French invasion largely upon the Venetian Republic. Now, three months later, the replies of the Signoria to Beatrice were as vague as they were courteous. Venice had no wish to break with Milan, yet she had resolved to keep out of a contest which did not necessarily involve her interests. Alexander VI., however, with the papal territories and Rome itself on the line of march from France to Naples, could not afford to remain neutral. He at once threw himself on the side of Naples, the reconciliation between himself and Ferrante being sealed by the marriage of Don Gioffre Borgia to Alfonso's illegitimate daughter, Sancia. Thus, before the end of 1493 the lines of future action had already been determined. Charles VIII. would come to Italy as the ally of Milan, to be actively opposed by Naples, the Papacy and Florence, while Venice would stand complacently aloof from the struggle which might prove to the ultimate advantage of the neutral power.

Meanwhile Brasca's embassy to Germany had been carried out in a manner highly satisfactory to Lodovico. Besides the matter of the investiture, Brasca had instructions to propose a marriage alliance between Maximilian, King of the Romans, and Bianca Maria Sforza, Gian Galeazzo's sister. Bianca had hitherto been singularly unfortunate in her attempts at matrimony. In her infancy she had been betrothed to Philibert of Savoy, who had died before Bianca was old enough to marry him. Some years later it was arranged that she should marry John Corvinus, but on his failure to succeed his father as King of Hungary, the matter was allowed to drop. Now at last her star was in the ascendant, for Maximilian lent a favourable ear to both Brasca's proposals. The death of the old Emperor

¹ Segre, A., *Lodovico Sforza e la Repubblica di Venezia dall' autunno 1494 alla primavera 1495*. Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1902.

Frederick III., in August, probably furthered Il Moro's designs with regard to the investiture, as this was a point upon which Frederick had shown himself consistently obdurate. Maximilian, however, had not his father's tenacity of purpose, and he agreed readily enough to marry Bianca with a dowry of 300,000 ducats. To this sum was added an extra 100,000 ducats to give, according to the grandiloquent language of the treaty, "more solemnity and lustre to the deed," or, in plain English, to form the price of the imperial investiture. On 30th November Bianca was married to the imperial ambassadors in the Duomo of Milan, in the presence of French envoys whom Charles VIII. had sent to do honour to the occasion. A few days later she set out for Innsbruck, being accompanied as far as Como by her mother, Bona of Savoy, and other members of the Milanese Court. Maximilian proved a somewhat tardy bridegroom, for it was not until the following March that he and Bianca met. Towards Il Moro, however, he acted with unusual good faith. An imperial diploma, dated from Anversa on 5th September, 1494, confirmed Lodovico in all the dignities and privileges enjoyed by Gian Galeazzo Visconti in virtue of the investiture granted to him by the Emperor Wenzel in 1395. The reasons for preferring Il Moro to his nephew were given at length in the preamble. Not only was Lodovico the first-born son of Francesco Sforza after he became Duke, but Milan having lapsed to the Empire by the death of Filippo Maria Visconti, Maximilian might bestow the fief on whom he would, and "you we have judged to be the only person worthy of being raised to this high rank".¹ In spite of this vindication of his deed, Maximilian stipulated that the investiture should for the present be kept secret, and Lodovico pocketed the diploma until the time should come for him to play it as the trump-card of his game.

The beginning of the year 1494 witnessed the last desperate efforts on the part of the Italian Powers to avert the coming catastrophe. It was hoped that Il Moro's alliance with Maximilian would make him less eager to further the cause of France. Hence both the Pope and Ferrante wrote to entreat

¹ Corio gives this and other documents relating to the investiture.

Lodovico not to act rashly, while the latter contemplated coming to Genoa in order to woo Sforza from the side of France by means of a personal interview. Il Moro, true to his diplomatic ideal of always disguising his real intentions from his enemies, expressed much regret at his inability to turn the royal mind of Charles VIII. from its purpose, and explained that the ambitions of Orleans with regard to Milan rendered it impossible for him to quarrel with France. At the same time he sent Galeazzo San Severino to France with instructions to push on the Neapolitan expedition by every means in his power. With King Ferrante's death in January, the last obstacle to the outbreak of war was removed. Whereas Ferrante disliked the papal alliance and had never wholly despaired of a reconciliation with Lodovico, Alfonso, who succeeded his father on the throne of Naples, was Il Moro's bitter enemy and was hand and glove with Alexander VI. When the Pope wrote to beg Charles VIII. to desist from his invasion for the sake of the peace of Italy, the French King could reply that if Alexander VI. cared ought for the peace of Italy, he would not have invested the usurper Alfonso with the Kingdom of Naples. In March the French Court moved to Lyons, from whence Belgioioso sent numerous despatches to Milan, telling of the preparations for war and of the favourable reception of San Severino by Charles VIII. Thither, too, fled Giuliano della Rovere, who owing to the independent policy of Alexander VI. found in Rome no scope for his ambitions. If the current report may be believed, it was this warrior-Pope of the future who finally persuaded Charles VIII. to start for Italy. Thus, if to Il Moro belongs the chief blame for bringing the French across the Alps, he had at least a companion in guilt.

Lodovico had every reason to wish for the speedy arrival of the French if they were to come in time to save him from the vengeance of Alfonso. Archbishop Fregoso readily promised the King of Naples to effect a revolution in Genoa, and in June Federico of Aragon, Alfonso's brother, brought a fleet to co-operate with the Fregosi in their attempt on the city. Federico surprised the Milanese Government by an attack on Porto

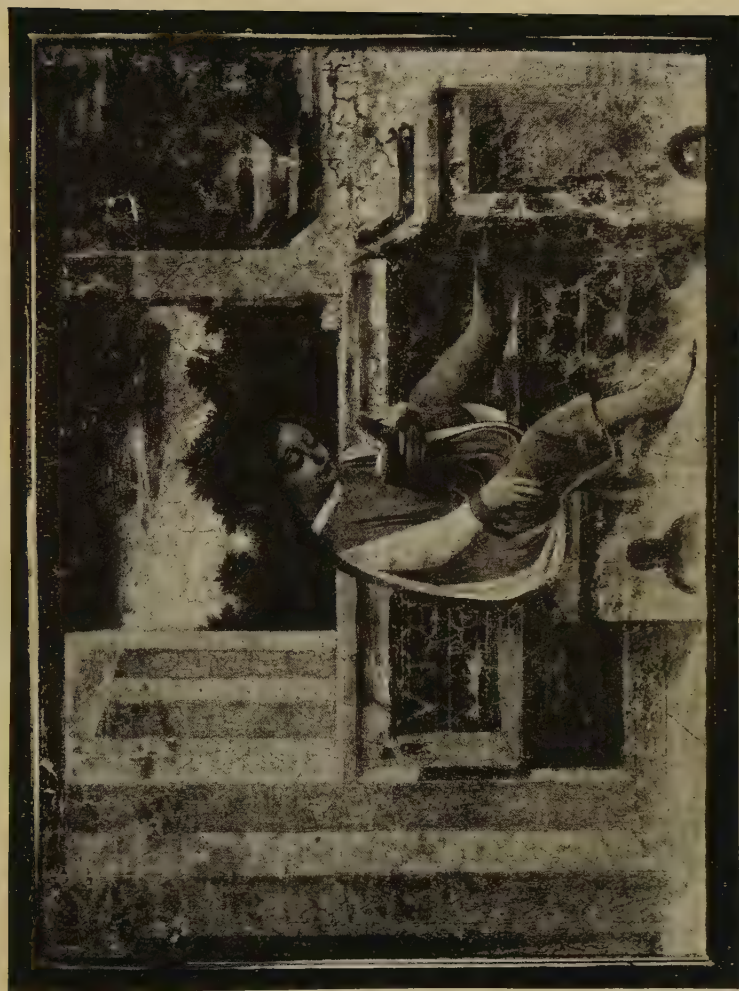
Venere, and when he was repulsed by the bravery of the inhabitants he occupied Rapallo. In September, however, the Duke of Orleans launched his French fleet from Genoa, and in conjunction with a land army from Milan he recaptured Rapallo, forcing Federico to retire on Leghorn. Yet it was commonly believed that if Orleans had delayed his coming Genoa would have been lost. Meanwhile Alfonso's son, Ferrantino, Duke of Calabria, had been sent at the head of a considerable army to Romagna with orders to stir up a rebellion against Il Moro's Government in the name of Gian Galeazzo. Here again Lodovico was saved by the arrival of his French allies. On 23rd August the first French troops under Stuart d'Aubigny and La Trémouille marched through Parma to press on down the Via Æmilia in company with some Milanese forces under Caiazzo. Ferrantino made no show of resistance but gradually retired before the advancing enemy until he was once more in Neapolitan territory. At length, in September, Charles VIII. himself arrived at Asti. Lodovico and the Duke of Ferrara were already there to welcome the royal stranger, while Beatrice established herself at the neighbouring Castle of Annona with a suite of eighty ladies. Charles VIII., in spite of his somewhat unprepossessing appearance, won many hearts by his modest, gentle manners and his simple kindness. "Truly this King is one of the best and most amiable princes in the world,"¹ Belgioioso had written from France. Now Beatrice was equally charmed by the courtesy with which he advanced cap in hand to meet her and her ladies, and then proceeded after the French fashion to kiss each one of them from the Duchess downwards.² Nevertheless, Lodovico watched his royal ally with considerable alarm. He would infinitely have preferred the French to proceed by the sea route from Naples to Genoa, but Charles insisted on going by way of Lombardy. While he was at Asti the King fell ill of small-pox, and hence it was not until 14th October that he reached Pavia. Here he found the unfortunate Duke Gian Galeazzo seriously ill and unable to leave his bed in order to welcome

¹ Cantù, *Gli Sforza e Charles VIII.* Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1888.

² Luzio-Renier, *op. cit.* Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1890.

the French King. Charles, however, mindful of the ties of kinship which bound him to the son of Bona of Savoy, insisted on visiting the invalid. Gian Galeazzo appears to have done little more than commend his wife and children to the King's care, and Commynes, who professes to have heard an account of the interview from Charles himself, explains that the fear of offending Lodovico prevented their conversation from going beyond general topics. At this juncture, according to the most generally accepted version of the story, Isabella of Aragon threw herself on her knees before the French King imploring him to spare her father and brother. Charles VIII. replied that it was too late now for him to alter his purpose, and bade her pray rather for herself and her husband. A few days later Charles VIII. resumed his journey accompanied by Lodovico, who was overtaken at Piacenza by the news that his nephew was dying. Il Moro rushed back to Pavia to find that Gian Galeazzo had breathed his last on the morning of 21st October. Without a moment's delay he hurried on to Milan, and gathering some of the leading citizens within the Castello he proposed that Gian Galeazzo's infant son, Francesco, should be proclaimed Duke in his father's stead. Thereupon the Treasurer, Antonio Landriano, at the instigation of Lodovico's supporters, if not of Il Moro himself, rose to protest against the election of a child-Duke during these troublous times, and to propose that Lodovico, who had for so long exercised the functions of Duke, should now assume the title. Baldassare Pusterla, Andrea Cagnola and other friends of Lodovico warmly seconded Landriano's proposal, and none daring to contradict them, Il Moro was proclaimed Duke without further delay. Lodovico only remained in Milan to provide for the funeral of the late Duke. When on 27th October the body of Gian Galeazzo had been laid to rest in the Duomo, he departed to rejoin Charles VIII., who was travelling by way of Pontremoli to Florence.

For all his eighteen years' reign, Gian Galeazzo Sforza remains but a shadowy figure in the history of Milan. Horses, dogs and the pleasures of the table appear to have been the chief delights of his feeble mind. He was occasionally rendered



GIAN GALEAZZO SFORZA READING CICERO

FRESCO ASCRIBED TO BRAMANTINO

Walters Collection

violent by drink;¹ yet he showed signs of pathetic affection for the uncle who might well be considered his worst enemy. The night before his death he anxiously asked his attendant whether Lodovico loved him and was sorry to see him ill. Then, consoling himself with the thought that Il Moro would have come to see him if he had not been obliged to attend Charles VIII., the young Duke went peacefully to sleep. So died Gian Galeazzo. "It seemed an inhuman thing," says Corio, "that before he had reached the age of twenty-five this immaculate lamb should be taken from the number of the living." His death had occurred at such an exceedingly opportune moment that it appeared to many a clear case of poisoning. Théodore Guaynier, the French doctor who accompanied Charles VIII., declared that he had detected signs of poisoning in Gian Galeazzo when he saw him at Pavia. Contemporary chroniclers repeated and improved upon the tale until the fact that Lodovico Sforza was his nephew's murderer became one of the commonplaces of history. Later historians have, however, shown themselves somewhat sceptical as to Lodovico's guilt. Recent researches in the Milanese archives have revealed no vestige of proof that Gian Galeazzo's death was due to other than natural causes,² while a modern biographer of Charles VIII.³ shows that the French King, at any rate, was convinced of Lodovico's innocence. Gian Galeazzo had been sickly from childhood, and his health had shown visible signs of failure for some time before his death. During these months Isabella had watched over him with unceasing vigilance. She was ready to suspect Lodovico of everything and anything, and although she could not restore her husband to his rights she could at least guard him from poison. Moreover, although there is no reason to suppose that Il Moro would have been restrained by any conscientious scruples, his lack of nerve and

¹ Cf. Letter of May, 1492, quoted by Uzielli, *Leonardo da Vinci e tre gentildonne Milanesi* (1890): "Il Duca di Milano ha battuto sua moglie". Uzielli assumes that this refers to Lodovico, but no contemporary would call him Duke of Milan at that date.

² Cf. Magenta, C., *Castello di Pavia*; Porro, G., *Arch. Stor. Lomb.*, 1882, p. 486; Luzio-Renier, *Arch. Stor. Lomb.*, 1890, p. 397.

³ Delaborde.

initiative, coupled with his natural distaste for violence, make him singularly unsuited for the rôle of murderer. It is, too, hard to see why, if Lodovico intended to poison his nephew, he had not done so long ago. As early as 1482 Sixtus IV. accused him of having planned Gian Galeazzo's death, and in 1490 the Florentine ambassador sounded him on the subject to receive the somewhat ambiguous reply: "If I were capable of such a thing, I should be infamous in the eyes of the whole world". Assassinations which have been expected for twelve years do not as a rule come off. Hence it seems, on the whole, probable that Gian Galeazzo was the victim not of poison but of consumption. There are those, however, who continue to lay the guilt at Il Moro's door,¹ and who detect in the long delay, in the emphatic disavowals, and in the death of the young Duke when Lodovico had at length received the imperial diploma drawn up in his own name, the hand of a past master in the art of intrigue. In view of the existing state of evidence they have at least a right to their opinion.

It was expected that the first serious opposition to Charles VIII. would occur in the Lunigiana, where the Florentine fortresses of Sarzana, Pietrasanta, Pisa and Leghorn were prepared to resist the advance of the French. Hence Piero dei Medici's sudden collapse and his cession of the four fortresses to Charles VIII. produced general consternation. To few was the episode more displeasing than to Lodovico. With the armies of Naples in full retreat, his object in bringing the French to Italy was already achieved, and the longer Charles was delayed on his journey the better it suited Il Moro's purpose. Now, however, the French King had passed beyond his control, and the road to Rome lay open. After a vain attempt to gain Sarzana and Pietrasanta for himself, Lodovico returned in disgust to Milan to watch, with increasing apprehension, Charles VIII.'s victorious march to Naples. The progress of the French armies, in the eyes of those who witnessed it, could only be ascribed to Divine intervention. Alexander VI. forgot his former boldness as the troops advanced on the papal

¹ Cf. Dina, A., *Arch. Stor. Lomb.*, 1884, p. 716; Fossati, F., *Arch. Stor. Lomb.*, 1904, p. 162.

city, and, shutting himself in the Castle of S. Angelo, he left Rome at their mercy. King Alfonso abdicated before the French had entered Neapolitan territory. Ferrantino, who had succeeded his father, made some show of resistance only to escape to Ischia the day before Charles VIII. entered Naples. Even the weather smiled kindly on the French cause, and the long march in midwinter was unhampered by frost or snow. When the news reached Milan that Charles had made himself master of Naples on 22nd February, Il Moro's alarm was at its height. The ease with which the French claims on Naples had been vindicated might well turn Charles's thoughts towards the French claims on Milan. Lodovico turned in terror towards the Venetians to propose the formation of a League which should free Italy from the French.

Il Moro found himself by no means alone in his fear of France. The Pope had made humble submission to Charles VIII., yet he was only awaiting an opportunity to repudiate his promises. Venice, for all her boasted neutrality, began to fear an alliance between France and the Turk. Maximilian regarded Charles VIII.'s high-handed interference in the affairs of Italy as an affront to the imperial dignity. Ferdinand of Spain, as the ruler of Sicily, could not view with equanimity the establishment of a European rival on the other side of the narrow Gulf of Messina. Hence the representatives of these five Powers opened negotiations at Venice for the preservation of their dominions. Commynes, who was in Venice at the time, describes the meetings held under cover of night and the attempts on the part of the Doge and the Milanese ambassador to disguise from him their true significance, until at length, on Palm Sunday (10th April), the League was proclaimed. The French King was not directly mentioned, yet none could doubt that the real object of this alliance was to drive him and his armies out of Italy. To Lodovico, however, Charles VIII. was many degrees less dangerous than his cousin of Orleans, who had remained in Asti throughout the winter, and whose assumption of the title of Duke of Milan bade defiance to the House of Sforza. At Il Moro's instigation, Maximilian called upon Orleans to renounce the obnox-

ous title on pain of forfeiting the imperial fief of Asti, while Galeazzo San Severino went with an army to Asti in order to force the Duke to surrender. Yet Orleans was not to be frightened into the renunciation of his claims. His troops showed themselves more than a match for the Milanese. Early in June a successful sally on the part of the garrison at Asti resulted in the capture of Novara. It was reported that Orleans intended to press on to Milan, and that he could reckon on considerable support from the inhabitants of the Duchy. This bad news proved too much for Il Moro's nerves. He shut himself up in the Castello of Milan, and actually contemplated flying from Italy without further effort to save himself. Beatrice, however, was not prepared to submit so tamely. Aided by Landriano, she provided for the defence of the capital, and contrived to restore some degree of confidence to the panic-stricken magistrates until the crisis was ended by the arrival of reinforcements from Venice. With their assistance Galeazzo San Severino was able to besiege the French in Novara and to hold the ambitions of Orleans momentarily in check.

Meanwhile Charles VIII. had started on his return journey from Naples in the hope that he might escape to France without coming into contact with the armies of the League. The allies on their side prepared to encounter the French as they descended from the Apennines by the valley of the Taro. Stradiots, or Greek light horse in the service of Venice, Swiss and German infantry sent by Maximilian, the Milanese contingent under the Count of Caiazzo, and a numerous body of Venetians, comprised the motley array over which the Marquis of Mantua was placed in supreme command. On 6th July the two armies met at Fornovo, and a battle took place in which both sides claimed the victory. At the end of the day the forces of the League still held the road along the bank of the Taro to Parma, while the Stradiots had captured the French baggage. Yet the main French army had succeeded in crossing the river and in escaping across the mountains to Borgo San Donino. Current opinion attributed the failure of the allies to cut off the French retreat to the deliberate policy of Lodo-

vico Sforza. When the aim of the French in crossing the Taro was discovered, the Marquis of Mantua led an attack on their rear, while he bade Caiazzo cross the stream lower down in order to turn the French advance guard. Caiazzo's failure to do this was held to be in accordance with secret instructions from his master, who had no wish to see the French entirely crushed. The Venetian forces were far superior in numbers to the Milanese, in whose territory they fought. Hence, if Charles VIII. were decisively beaten, Milan would be at the mercy of her ancient rival, while the French King would never forgive the man who had first brought him to Italy and then caused his ruin. Such considerations are eminently characteristic of Il Moro. If he had, indeed, told Caiazzo to hold off in order that the battle might be indecisive, he could congratulate himself upon the success of his machinations. "If others had fought as we did," wrote the Marquis of Mantua to his wife the day after the battle, "the victory would have been complete. Not a single Frenchman would have escaped."¹ As it was, the French hurried on to Asti, thanking God that they had issued from the contest with unimpaired honour, and only desirous of reaching home before fresh perils should overtake them.

From Fornovo the armies of the League set out for Novara, upon which all efforts were now concentrated. On 5th August the Duke and Duchess of Milan were present at a grand review of the entire force, which Corio estimates at some 45,000 men. The Marquis of Mantua was the hero of the hour, and the honours with which he was loaded enabled him so far to recover from his first disappointment as to have Mantegna's *Madonna della Vittoria* painted in commemoration of his "victory". With the camp of the League beneath the walls of Novara, the rigours of the siege were redoubled. Hence Orleans, finding himself on the brink of starvation, sent imploring messages to Charles VIII. bidding him come to his help without delay. A party in the French camp, headed by Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, who entered the service of Charles

¹ Luzio-Renier, *Francesco Gonzaga alla battaglia di Fornovo*. Arch. Stor. Ital., 1890.

VIII. in Naples, was eager for fresh warfare. More moderate counsels ultimately prevailing, Commynes was despatched with other of his compatriots to treat of peace with the League. The conference took place in the lodgings of the Duke of Milan at Cameriano where, according to Commynes' description, the representatives of the contracting parties sat facing each other on two long rows of chairs. Lodovico who, with Beatrice, was present at every meeting, found the proceedings hampered by the French habit of all talking at once, and his repeated cries of "No, one at a time," appear to have been a feature of the conference. Negotiations seemed likely to drag on indefinitely had not the arrival of a large Swiss force in aid of the French made Lodovico anxious for peace at all costs. On 10th October matters were brought to a conclusion by means of a separate treaty between France and Milan. Novara should be restored to Lodovico, who on his side agreed to send two ships in aid of the French garrison at Naples, to support Charles VIII. if he returned to Italy, and to recognise French suzerainty with regard to Genoa. The Castelletto of Genoa was handed over to the Duke of Ferrara for two years as a guarantee for Il Moro's good behaviour.

On the conclusion of the Peace of Vercelli the French King set out for France, and before the end of October he had reached Grenoble. Early in July Ferrantino had been welcomed back to Naples, while the few fortresses still held by the French were hard pressed. Yet Lodovico showed no signs of equipping the promised ships. Commynes, who had lingered in Italy in order to persuade Venice to agree to the recent treaty, did his best to hold the Duke of Milan to his word, and when the worthy Frenchman started on his journey home, he thought that he had achieved his purpose. All the way to Lyons he was listening for the sound of hoofs which would foretell the arrival of Il Moro's promised courier with the news that the ships had set sail for Naples. Yet so slippery a person as Lodovico was not easily caught. Commynes found that he had been deceived by fair words. The ships did not sail, nor had Il Moro ever intended that they should do so. The French flood had rolled back, and Lodovico, with every other

Italian prince, was only occupied in repairing the havoc which it had wrought.

Lodovico Sforza's position on the departure of the French seemed fully to justify his action in bringing Charles VIII. into Italy. Owing to the presence of the French armies Lodovico had been able to assume the lordship of Milan on Gian Galeazzo's death without interference on the part of his neighbours. Ferrantino of Naples, far from contemplating any act of vengeance, spent the months which followed Lodovico's *coup d'état* in entreating his aid against the French. The weight of her misfortunes had crushed even Isabella's proud spirit. For the next few years she lived in complete retirement in the Castello of Milan, occupied only with her children, and acquiescent in the triumph of her rival. Moreover, thanks to the prominent part which he had played in the formation of the League of Venice, Lodovico could not be made the scapegoat for the iniquities of the French. He became rather the power to whom other Italian princes looked as best able to protect them from further invasions. Above all, Lodovico had now received the crown of his triumphs in the shape of the imperial investiture. On the death of Gian Galeazzo, Il Moro had not ventured to reveal the existence of the imperial diploma without Maximilian's consent. He had, however, promptly sent an envoy to Germany to apologise for his assumption of the office of Duke before he had formally received the title, and to ask that ambassadors might be sent as soon as possible to perform the material act of investiture. Until this should take place Lodovico was careful to style himself *Lodovicus Dux*, which in default of further specification might be taken to refer to his old title of Duke of Bari. At length, on 26th May, 1495, the wished-for ceremony took place. The imperial ambassadors solemnly read the act of investiture on the Piazza del Duomo and adorned Lodovico with the ducal insignia, while Giasone del Maino delivered an oration in honour of the occasion. Now for the first time a Sforza Duke ruled Milan not merely by right of popular election, but by right of the title which, just one hundred years earlier, had been granted to Gian Galeazzo Visconti. Lodovico might well aspire to the heights

attained by his great predecessor, who had gone nearer than any other Italian prince to becoming the ruler of a united Italy.

It so happened that a town which had formed part of Gian Galeazzo Visconti's inheritance came at this time within the range of Lodovico Sforza's ambitions. In spite of Charles VIII.'s promises, the fortress of Pisa had not been restored to Florence on the departure of the French. Now, in January, 1496, the French governor sold it to the Pisans for a sum of money which was furnished by Milan and Venice, while Milanese and Venetian forces helped to defend the liberties of Pisa against the Florentines. After the first few weeks Lodovico left the defence of Pisa mainly to the Venetians. Yet it is clear that he did so in the hope that when they grew tired of the war he would be able to grasp the prize. Meanwhile the French troops in Asti under Trivulzio were threatening Milan and a new invasion seemed imminent. Hence Lodovico proposed to call Maximilian to Italy in order that he might champion the cause of the League. Il Moro's devoted friend, Marchesino Stanga, was sent to Germany in the spring of 1496, where he arranged that Maximilian should meet the Duke of Milan on the frontiers of his dominions to discuss a plan of operations. The interview took place in July, at the Abbey of Malz in the Valtellina, whither Lodovico was accompanied by his wife and by the Venetian ambassador. Maximilian did his best to treat the whole affair as a pleasant hunting party rather than as a diplomatic negotiation. Nevertheless a scheme was laid by which Maximilian should announce that he was coming to Italy in order to receive the imperial crown at the hands of the Pope. On his arrival he would take the opportunity to relieve Pisa, and to wrest Leghorn from Florence. The original proposal had been to close the chief passes of the Alps against the French by drawing the border States of Savoy and Montferrat to the side of the Empire. Trivulzio should then be driven from Asti, Florence should be forced to join the League, and Italy would present a united front against the invader. Venice, however, feared to place so much power in the hands of either Maximilian or Lodovico.

Thus the scheme was reduced to an indirect attack on France through her Florentine allies.

It has been well said that, of all Maximilian's schemes, "none were more fantastic and fruitless than the enterprise of Pisa".¹ He came with few men and less money to embark upon a campaign in which he figured for all practical purposes as the *condottiere* of the League. So complete was his dependence upon his allies that Maximilian did not venture to reply to the Florentine ambassadors who met him on his arrival in Italy. When they approached the thorny question of Florentine rights over Pisa, he referred them to the Duke of Milan, pleading press of business as his excuse. In October this imperial soldier of fortune entered Pisa. Thereupon the enthusiastic inhabitants tore down the statue of Charles VIII., which they had erected two years earlier in the place of the Florentine *marzocco*, to make room for the imperial eagles. Yet Maximilian was kept short of supplies by Venice, the weather was unfavourable and his troops were badly disciplined. When French vessels arrived for the defence of Leghorn he gave up the task as hopeless, and returned in disgust to Germany. Nor were Lodovico's ambitions with regard to Pisa furthered by Maximilian's expedition. Venice suspected, probably rightly, that Lodovico intended to obtain the investiture of Pisa from Maximilian. Having fathomed his designs, she proceeded to frustrate them by withholding the funds necessary to make the enterprise effective. Lodovico, on his side, realised that he had more to fear from Venice than from Florence with regard to Pisa. From henceforth his championship of the Pisans ceased, and the year 1498 saw him aiding the Florentines to crush their nascent liberties. Yet the cordial relations which existed between Lodovico and his imperial guest enhanced the reputation of Milan in the eyes of other Italian Powers. At the same time, Maximilian's visit gained for Il Moro and his children a friend who, notwithstanding his reputation for flightiness, stood by them in the hour of adversity. Attention has been drawn to Maximilian's failure to visit

¹ Stanley Leathes, *Italy and Her Invaders* (Cambridge Modern History, vol. i., ch. iv.).

Milan either on his outward or return journey. Yet in view of the marked pleasure which he took in the society of the Duke and Duchess of Milan, it is hard to discover any political motive for his neglect, or to attribute it to a deeper cause than Maximilian's habitual dislike of State ceremonies. Doubtless the three weeks which he spent at Vigevano with Lodovico and Beatrice were far more to his taste than a formal visit to Milan. Here Maximilian charmed every one by his courteous manners, while the open-air life at Vigevano and the cultivated society of his hosts were wholly congenial to him. The King of the Romans showed great interest in Lodovico's two little boys, and asked that the elder of them might be given his own name. Henceforth Ercole became Massimiliano, while the second child, born in 1495, was known as Francesco.

With Maximilian's expedition to Italy, Lodovico's triumphs reached their climax. So far everything had prospered with him, but now the tide of fortune turned, and from that time one blow after another fell on the unfortunate Duke until his ruin was complete. Even before Maximilian's departure the first trouble came with the death of Bianca Sforza, Lodovico's illegitimate daughter, who had only lately been married to Galeazzo San Severino. This beautiful girl had been betrothed to San Severino in 1489, and both she and her future husband had formed part of the Duke's intimate family circle. Beatrice had shown very real affection towards her step-daughter, and she now mourned for her as for her own child. Barely six weeks later the Court of Milan was deprived of a still brighter ornament owing to the death of Beatrice herself in giving birth to a still-born son. "I would rather have died myself than lose the dearest thing that I had in this world," wrote Lodovico to Francesco Gonzaga,¹ and the whole Court shared in his overwhelming sorrow. When Beatrice died, wrote a contemporary, "everything went into ruins, and the Court was changed from a happy paradise into a gloomy hell".² The young Duchess was buried in S. Maria delle Grazie. Henceforth the decoration of this church, with the adjoining convent,

¹ Luzio-Renier, Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1890.

² Renier, Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1886.



A. Ferrario

LODOVICO SFORZA AND BEATRICE D'ESTE

EFFIGIES FROM TOMB BY CRISTOFORO SOLARI

Certosa of Pavia

became Lodovico's chief interest. Cristoforo Solari was charged with the execution of Beatrice's tomb, crowned with the recumbent figures of herself and her husband who hoped one day to lie at her side. New altars were erected in honour of their patron saints S. Louis and S. Beatrice. Hard by, in the Convent Refectory, Leonardo turned from his all but completed "Last Supper" to paint the figures of the Duke and Duchess on the opposite wall. Not content with this, Lodovico caused a new city gate to be opened, bearing the name of Porta Beatrice, while his wife's initials figured with his own on all the chief public buildings. Milan would know Beatrice no more, yet the very walls and stones of the city should preserve the memory of her gracious presence.

With all his love for Beatrice, Lodovico was no model husband. In the sphere of private morals he shared the laxity of his age and race. The long delay over Beatrice's wedding, which had for a time made her friends despair of the marriage ever taking place, had been caused by Il Moro's affection for Cecilia Gallerani. This beautiful and accomplished lady held for several years the position at the Court of Milan which would naturally belong to Lodovico's wife. Leonardo painted her portrait, the Court poets sang her praises, and Il Moro treated her with every mark of honour. Beatrice, however, was not of the temperament to allow the existence of a rival, and she persuaded her husband to see no more of Cecilia. In July, 1491, the lady was married to Count Bergamini of Cremona, although not before she had given birth to a son, whom Il Moro openly recognised as his own. Cecilia Gallerani had not been the first of Lodovico's mistresses, nor did she prove the last. The year before his wife's death Il Moro found a fresh object for his affections in the person of Lucrezia Crivelli, one of Beatrice's maids of honour. In the midst of his mourning for Beatrice, Lodovico remembered the claims of this mistress. A document of July, 1497, records a grant of lands to Lucrezia Crivelli as a provision for her new-born son, Gian Paolo. Yet, notwithstanding these occasional lapses, it is no sentimental exaggeration to say that round Beatrice d'Este centred the romance of Lodovico's life. Il Moro's love for his girl-wife was of a deeper

and more lasting nature than passion, and in the ascendancy which she held over her husband's complex personality Beatrice knew no rival. On the eve of Lodovico's flight to Germany before the advancing armies of France, it was to Beatrice that his thoughts turned. It was by her grave in S. Maria delle Grazie that his last hours in Milan were spent.

Il Moro had always been an affectionate and even an anxious father. A letter written by a member of the Court, when Massimiliano was a year old, relates how the little prince was "slightly indisposed yesterday and to-day, for no other cause than the teeth which he is cutting and which give him some pain. Yet, even though the evil is small, Signor Lodovico is much distressed and displeased about it—more so than is necessary."¹ After Beatrice's death, Lodovico's solicitude was redoubled. In June, 1498, Il Moro turned from the intricate diplomacy which occupied him throughout the year to appoint "Messer Aluysio Trivulzio and Messer Princivale Visconti" Massimiliano's guardians, and to draw up an elaborate paper of instructions for their guidance. Hitherto the children had been under the charge of Camilla Sforza, the widow of Costanzo, Lord of Pesaro. Now that Massimiliano was promoted to male guardians, Camilla, probably fearing encroachments upon her province, also applied for a written list of duties, in order that she might know better "how to carry out Your Excellency's wishes"². In view of the vast problems pressing upon the ruler of Milan, there is something strangely pathetic in the mass of letters which are to be found in the documents of the day, reporting upon the well-being of his motherless children.³ "The Count of Pavia and the Duke of Bari continue in good health." "Count Massimiliano is well and your son Francesco likewise." So the reports run on, varied by prattling letters from the children themselves, telling of their pleasures and occupations, making small requests and expressing many regrets at their father's absence. To judge from the correspondence

¹ Milan, Archivio di Stato, *Potenze Sovrane, Massimiliano, Vicende personali*.

² *Cod. cit.*

³ *Cod. cit.* Also, *Lodivico Il Moro, Vicende personali; Francesco II., Vicende personali*.

relating to his children, Lodovico might have had no cares and no ambitions save those that centred round the two little boys.

Much has been said and written of Lodovico's care for the material improvement of his dominions. Yet, although there is no doubt as to Il Moro's interest in economic development, it is a subject upon which accurate information is hard to obtain. One point, however, stands out clearly. That is the extraordinarily modern and even scientific spirit in which Il Moro approached all such questions. An interesting document has been preserved in the Milanese Archives,¹ in which are set forth the various provisions which Lodovico made for the benefit of his subjects at the opening of the reign. Besides the usual remission of penalties with which each Duke marked his accession, Lodovico instituted a detailed inquiry into all abuses calculated to vex the inhabitants of the Duchy. Two leading citizens were deputed to inquire into the frauds and extortions connected with the salt monopoly. Two more were charged with the scrutiny of those city officials known as the Judges of the Streets and of Victuals, with a view to preventing unlawful oppression on their part. All subjects from whom the tax-gatherers had collected more than their due were invited to lay their complaints before appointed representatives in each city. More than this, Marchesino Stanga and two colleagues were formed into a kind of commission "to discover with all diligence the best expedients for producing a greater abundance of food in the country, more especially of grain". In thus seeking to increase the agricultural products of the Duchy, Lodovico laid his finger upon the chief source of wealth possessed by the ruler of Milan, namely, the great fertility of his dominions. The inquiry which he instituted showed his determination to turn the hitherto undeveloped resources of the country to some account. Side by side with this commission went Il Moro's own agricultural experiments upon his estates near Vigevano. Here Lodovico built the villa known as *La Sforzesca*, while hard by rose the model farm of

¹ Archivio di Stato, *Potenze Sovrane, Lodovico Il Moro, Vicende personali*: "Summario de le provisione ordinate per lo Ill^{mo} et Ex^{mo} Lodovico Maria Sforza Vesconti Duca de Milano in questa nova assumptione sua al Ducato, per commodita et beneficio de li subditi soi".

La Pecorara, or *La Grange* as the French called it. Besides planting vineyards and establishing sheep farms, Lodovico introduced the cultivation of the mulberry, bringing men who had gained experience among the mulberry-trees of Verona and Vicenza to carry out his schemes. The French chronicler, Robert Gaguin, gives the fullest description of the ducal farm. He waxes eloquent over "the marvellous number of beasts" that he saw there, and over the admirable system on which the farm was worked. Through the meadow land in which it stood ran "thirty-three streams of fair living water". Homes for the foremen of each department were provided in the central square of the farm, while behind lay a block of dwellings for the labourers and their families. Hay, milk, cheese, butter were all carefully weighed, and the farm was organised upon strictly scientific principles. Lodovico's experiments attracted the attention of Leonardo da Vinci, whose note-books contain several references to details which struck him during a visit to Vigevano. He observed the practice of burying the vines during the winter months, the original construction of the mills, and, above all, the admirable system of irrigation, which formed the chief glory of the Vigevano estates. By means of confiscation and purchase Lodovico gained possession of the greater part of the Lomellina. He then set himself to fertilise the hitherto dry and barren district by means of canals. Chief of these was the Naviglio Sforzesco, which brought the waters of the Ticino to the Lomellina, thus rendering a large tract of waste land productive. It appears that the Martesana Canal, which brought the waters of the Adda to Milan, had been allowed to fall into bad repair at this period. Now Lodovico instituted an inquiry into the working of the canal in order to remedy the abuses which rendered it unnavigable. From henceforth taking water from the canal by unauthorised channels was prohibited. It was decreed that all mills must be of a certain size, that the flow of the stream must not be checked with refuse, and that wharves must be cleaned twice a year. In 1498 Leonardo was made chief engineer of the Duchy, with the care of its rivers and waterways. Thanks to his labours, improvements were introduced both in the Martesana Canal and in the irrigation

of the Lomellina. Tradition further ascribes to him the connection of the Martesana with the old Naviglio Grande flowing from the Ticino.

At different periods of her history Milan suffered from terrible outbreaks of plague. The idea of a special hospital to meet cases of epidemic had originated under the Ambrosian Republic. It remained, however, to Lodovico and Ascanio Sforza to carry the scheme into execution by the foundation of the *Lazzaretto* in 1488. Not content with founding a hospital, Il Moro turned to Leonardo for suggestions as to some permanent remedy against the ravages of disease. Thereupon Leonardo produced an elaborate scheme for the rational reconstruction of the cities of Lombardy,¹ which would scatter the great mass of people, crowded "like goats one on the top of another," and so remove a continual cause of disease and death. Many of Leonardo's ideas with regard to building and sanitation are those which are commonly regarded as the exclusive property of the present century. His insistence upon light, air, open spaces and wide streets might come from the modern social reformer, while his proposals for the regulation of traffic are in advance of what has been achieved to-day. There would be two kinds of streets in Leonardo's ideal city. Carts and heavy vehicles would be confined to the lower roads, upon a level with the basements of the houses, while elegant hanging streets would be reserved for pedestrians and light traffic. Leonardo's schemes remained for the most part in his notebooks. Yet the improvements which Lodovico carried out in the cities of his dominions bear the mark of his influence. Streets were widened and squares were enlarged both in Milan and in Pavia, while at Vigevano improvements were executed upon a large scale. With its numerous new buildings, its handsome square and its freshly paved streets, it seemed to the historian Cagnola "not Vigevano, but a new city".

Improvements which add to the burden of the ratepayer do not bring popularity to their originator, however great may be their value. Lodovico's reforms proved no exception to the general rule. Moreover, his irrigation works in the Lomellina

¹ Cf. Solmi, E., *Leonardo*. Florence, 1900.

were carried through with a high hand. Private rights were disregarded, and lands were confiscated with scant regard for justice, in order that the system might be made complete. In the outcry against these acts of tyranny, the inestimable boon which Lodovico's waterways had conferred on the Lomellina was forgotten, and his work there was added to the list of grievances which his subjects laid up against him. As has been already noticed, the government of Milan under Lodovico advanced by leaps and bounds towards autocracy. In former years the administration of the revenues of Milan remained in the hands of the municipality, and an annual contribution was made from them to the Ducal Camera. A petition of the citizens to Louis XII. in 1502, for a yearly revenue with which to provide for the public needs, points to a change of system, whereby the Duke had gained entire control over the finances of the city. Doubtless Lodovico considered that he could spend the money to greater advantage than the citizens themselves, but this was a distinction which the Milanese could not be expected to appreciate. Il Moro's refusal to trust his subjects must be reckoned among the causes which made him forfeit their confidence. Whether or no Gian Galeazzo's death should be laid at Il Moro's door, it certainly undermined his position in Milan. The chronicler, Ambrogio da Paullo, says that at the time of the imperial investiture, there was no one who cried *Duca* and *Moro* save the Court favourites. This same writer attributes Lodovico's subsequent misfortunes to the employment of "foreigners" in the Government, instead of "the old and established men of Milan," to the heavy loans which he exacted from all classes, and to the death of the young Duke. Thus, little by little, the breach between prince and people widened until Lodovico became morbidly conscious of his unpopularity. His anxiety was increased by the knowledge that he could not rely upon the strength of an army for the maintenance of his authority. The French invasion, if it had done nothing else, had emphasised the military weakness of the Italian States, which possessed no native infantry to supplement the mercenary forces, weakened by long years of comparative peace. Hence the despotism rested ultimately upon



FRANCESCO SFORZA II AS A CHILD
PORTRAIT BY AMBROGIO DE PREDIS

the will of the people. Once this was alienated the ruler of Milan stood at the mercy of a foreign opponent. Thus outward circumstances combined with Lodovico's natural timidity to cast a gloom of suspicion over the Court, such as recalled the last years of Filippo Maria Visconti. The first hint of a revolution, as at the time of the occupation of Novara by the Duke of Orleans, found Lodovico ready to abandon himself to his fate. It needed no prophet to foresee that if an invading army should enter Milanese territory the Duke would not stay to meet it.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FALL OF IL MORO—LOUIS XII. IN MILAN

(1498—1507)

ON 7th April, 1498, died Charles VIII. Louis, Duke of Orleans thereupon succeeded him on the throne of France, assuming at the same time the titles of King of the Two Sicilies and Duke of Milan. Aided by a map of Lombardy and by the information which Trivulzio could furnish, the new monarch at once began to lay his plans for a fresh Italian campaign, declaring that he would rather possess the Duchy of Milan for a single year than spend a whole life-time without it. The long-expected blow had fallen, and Lodovico Sforza must prepare to defend his dominions against the power of France.

There were many reasons which distinguished Lodovico Il Moro as the special object of Louis XII.'s enmity. From the days of the War of Ferrara, Louis of Orleans had asserted his claims to Milan, as the grandson of Valentina Visconti, whenever the opportunity arose. His failure in 1495 had but whetted his ambitions, and during the years between his return from Italy and his accession, he had encouraged the exiled Guelphs of Lombardy to seek his protection and support. Now as the successor to Charles VIII., Louis must avenge the insult to the French Crown contained in Il Moro's repudiation of the Treaty of Vercelli, while the high position which Lodovico held among the princes of Italy marked him out as the chief obstacle to the predominance of France. Even beyond the borders of Italy France had suffered from Lodovico's opposing influence. The Duke of Milan perpetually urged Maximilian to keep the French King out of Italy by means of an attack on Burgundy. In 1498 a campaign actually took place, financed for the most

part by Sforza. The campaign itself was of the slightest importance, yet the mere fact that Lodovico could thus procure war between France and the Empire formed a powerful reason for his undoing. A raid on the part of Trivulzio from Asti in June, 1498, removed all doubt as to Louis XII.'s intentions. From that time the rulers of France and of Milan were engaged in a fierce diplomatic contest which was of perhaps even greater importance than the war which followed it.¹

Lodovico's comparative failure in the diplomatic struggle was certainly not due to lack of effort. His agents found their way to all the chief Courts of Europe, including that of Henry VII., while they even penetrated to the Porte in the hope that an alliance with the Turk would prove an effective measure against Venice. Nevertheless, it seemed as if everything that the once prosperous Moro touched were doomed to failure. The result of all his embassies left him with only two allies outside Italy, the Sultan Bajazet and Maximilian. Friendship with the Turk certainly increased Lodovico's unpopularity among the Christian Powers, while the alliance with Maximilian was largely neutralised by Philip of Burgundy's treaty with Louis XII. and by the war between the Empire and the Swiss. It had seemed at first as if Lodovico would gain the support of the Swiss Cantons. Thus the treaty by which they placed themselves at the service of France, in return for protection and pensions, formed a serious blow to Milan. For this loss Lodovico was himself largely responsible. The Cantons were bound by their commerce to the side of Milan, and it was only when Lodovico, at Maximilian's request, closed the passes of the Alps to the Swiss during their war with the Empire that they decided to lend their aid to France.

In view of the ceaseless negotiations between Milan and the other Italian States, the little effective support which Lodovico obtained is a poor testimony to the diplomacy which he valued so highly. The Western States of Savoy, Montferrat and Saluzzo were bound by long-standing ties to France. Although they did not wholly commit themselves until Lodovico had

¹ Cf. Pélassier, L. G., *Louis XII. et Lodovic Sforza, 1498-1500* (École française d'Athènes et de Rome, 1896), for a full account of these negotiations.

wasted much time and money in the vain attempt to secure at least their neutrality, by the spring of 1499 they had declared for Louis XII. Hence the French gained free passage through Savoyard territory with promises of guides and provisions at a low tariff, privileges of no small importance to the invader of Lombardy. If Lodovico must reckon the Western States among his enemies, he might at any rate expect to find friends on the opposite frontiers of his dominions in the rulers of Mantua and Ferrara. Yet intimate as were the relations between Ercole d'Este and his son-in-law, the connection between France and Ferrara was equally close. Hence Ercole did his best to preserve a strict neutrality, offering himself as a mediator between Lodovico and Louis XII., but refusing to fight for either of them. All that Lodovico obtained from Ferrara was the loan of some artillery and the enthusiastic support of the young Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, Archbishop of Milan, who, regardless of his father's remonstrances that "the sole arms of a priest should be prayers,"¹ insisted on fighting under the Sforza banners. In spite of his wife's warm championship of the cause of Milan, the Marquis of Mantua was if anything worse than an open enemy. His reputation as a captain made him in great request. Hence he dallied with all parties in turn. Having at length secured high terms for himself from Lodovico and Maximilian, he occupied the intervening time with trumped-up complaints as to his salary until the arrival of the French in Milan enabled him to decide for the stronger power.

The real strength of Louis XII. in Italy lay, however, in his alliance with Venice and the Papacy. With regard to Venice, Lodovico's mistake consisted less in his failure to detach the Republic from the French alliance than in his refusal to believe that such an alliance could be final. Il Moro's desertion of Venice over the Peace of Vercelli and the mutual jealousy and suspicion which the two powers had shown in the affairs of Pisa, were but the outward signs of deep-seated rivalry. Milan and Venice had alone survived Charles VIII.'s invasion with unimpaired prestige. Thus the antagonism between these ancient

¹ Letter of August, 1499, Pélissier, *op. cit.*, vol. i., p. 196.

rivals for the possession of Lombardy became the predominant factor in Italian politics. From the moment of Louis XII.'s accession the Signoria had spared no pains to ingratiate themselves with the new monarch. It was only the French King's fear that Venice might prove an expensive ally which deferred the conclusion of a league between them until February, 1499. Yet even after the publication of the alliance, Lodovico continued to alternately threaten and fawn upon the Signoria until the dismissal of the Milanese ambassador in August formed the prelude to the occupation of the Ghiarad'adda by the Venetian forces. In the spring of 1498 Alexander VI. was still the grateful ally of the House of Sforza and the enemy of the foreign Power which had threatened to depose him. The responsibility for his change of front rests with Cæsar Borgia, whose matrimonial ambitions formed the guiding principle of papal policy. Cæsar had first aspired to the hand of Carlotta of Naples, and Sforza had undertaken to act as mediatory. Hence, when King Federico boldly refused to sacrifice his daughter to the designs of the ex-Cardinal, the relations between Milan and the Papacy grew cooler. Louis XII.'s request for a divorce, which would enable him to marry Anne of Brittany, offered fresh scope for Borgia, who now turned his thoughts towards a French marriage. The divorce was granted, and Louis XII., in return, created Cæsar Borgia Duke of Valentinois. As early as August, 1498, Ascanio Sforza reported from Rome: "The Pope is quite French since the Most Christian King has offered a Duchy to his son".¹ Thereupon Cæsar left for France only to return to Italy with the invading army of Louis XII. Of the other Italian Powers, Florence, whose sole thought was how best to ensure the recovery of Pisa, hesitated so long between France and Milan that she offended Louis XII. without helping Sforza. Thus Lodovico's only whole-hearted allies were Naples, Bologna and Forlì, all of whom were in almost as great danger as Il Moro himself. Federico of Naples knew that if Milan fell his own kingdom would be attacked next. Giovanni Bentivoglio and Caterina Sforza were threatened by Cæsar Borgia's designs on Romagna. It is char-

¹ Pélissier, *op. cit.*, vol. i.

acteristic, both of the dawdling Italian methods and of Il Moro's persistent ill-luck, that even the handful of forces which these three States could furnish arrived too late to share in the first campaign.

In his military preparations for the coming struggle, Lodovico proved no match for the energy and promptitude of Louis XII. The Duke of Milan seemed unable to grasp the possibility of the French army arriving punctually and all his preparations were begun too late. His methods can best be estimated by the reasons which he gave for postponing certain improvements in the fortifications of Novara. "These repairs," Il Moro wrote in April, 1499, "not being perhaps of immediate utility, and the materials which are used rapidly deteriorating, it would be better to suspend them and to begin again at the last moment."¹ When at length preparations began in good earnest, Il Moro showed both activity and wisdom, but the amount which was accomplished in a short time blinded him as to the true state of affairs. During the summer of 1499 the Duke of Milan was collecting money "furiously". The hated *inquinto* was added to the taxes. One-half of the annual revenue was asked from all ecclesiastical benefices, while lay fiefs were made to yield a year's income in its entirety. Ascanio Sforza set a good example of liberality by placing some 200,000 ducats at his brother's disposal, and the Mantuan ambassador reported that the Duke would soon have "a mint of money". Yet these extraordinary measures could not restore efficiency to a financial system which had for long been crippled by the expenses of past campaigns and of an extravagant Court. Hence Lodovico's arrangements suffered from a general shortness of funds, which quickly made itself felt among the *condottieri*, and which accounts for their reluctance to enter Milanese service. Above all, Il Moro experienced the want of able advisers. Galeazzo San Severino, who was entrusted with supreme control of the forces, was a brilliant soldier but a bad general. The favour which the Duke showed towards him was a constant source of jealousy to the other captains, notably to his own brothers. Hence the armies of Milan were inspired by no feeling of

¹ Pélissier, *op. cit.*, vol. i.

solidarity and common enthusiasm, while Lodovico could not but be aware that many of his subjects secretly sided with the enemy. An oath of loyalty was exacted from the principal families of the subject-towns, and pains were taken to remove suspected persons. Nevertheless, a contemporary chronicler declares that "the greater part of the Milanese desired the coming of the King, and they treated secretly with Signor Gian Giacomo (Trivulzio) as to the means whereby Il Moro could be destroyed".¹ Disaffection and treachery loomed dark on the horizon, making Lodovico's assertion to the Ferrarese ambassador that he was "strong in men, money and fortresses"² appear but an empty boast.

By the beginning of August the French army, which had for some time been collecting round Asti, mustered nearly 30,000 men. The supreme command was entrusted to Trivulzio in view of his knowledge of the country. On 13th August he began hostilities by an attack on Rocca d'Arazzo in the Tanaro valley. Lodovico's plan of campaign was to occupy the French over long sieges until he had collected an army strong enough to beat them in the open field. Hence Galeazzo San Severino and the bulk of the Milanese troops gathered at Alessandria, which was to form the first point of resistance. Meanwhile the French pressed on with astonishing rapidity. One by one the fortresses of the Western Milanese, Annona, Tortona, Valenza, fell into their hands until, by 25th August, they were before Alessandria. San Severino was apparently prepared to make a brave resistance. Hence the general consternation when three nights later, accompanied by Ermete Sforza and other of the chief captains, he slipped out of Alessandria and fled towards Pavia. The Milanese forces, left leaderless at the mercy of the French, either fled or were taken prisoner. Alessandria at once capitulated and the victorious army continued its march eastward. Unaccountable as San Severino's flight seems to-day, there is no reason to suppose that he was acting treacherously. The danger of finding the route to Pavia cut off by the French was imminent, and San

¹ Ambrogio da Paullo, *Cronaca Milanese*, 1476-1515.

² Pélissier, *op. cit.*, vol. i.

Severino had for some days urged the advantage of retiring to this second point of vantage before it was too late. It is even likely that he acted according to Il Moro's instructions. Once in Pavia he doubtless intended to collect his scattered army and to hold at all costs the route to Milan. His schemes were dashed to the ground by the refusal of Pavia to open her gates to the Milanese forces. Panic and disloyalty combined to dictate the message that "the place of soldiers is in the open field and not in towns".¹ With this repulse the war was virtually at an end.

Meanwhile confusion reigned in Milan. "Mistakes are now recognised and acknowledged," wrote the Ferrarese ambassador. "One is silent about them in order not to increase the sorrows of a man already stricken, but the situation could not well be worse."² Lodovico was, indeed, wholly overcome by his misfortunes. Feverish activity alternated with the blackest despair. At one moment he spoke of handing over Milan to the Empire, at the next he declared that he would place himself at the head of his troops in order that he might at least die as Duke of Milan. The unnerved condition of their Duke quickly communicated itself to the citizens, adding greatly to the general ferment. Lodovico's panic-stricken appeals for aid and advice to the College of Jurisprudence and to the chief guilds deprived the citizens of any feeling of confidence in their leader, while they increased the impression that it was necessary for Milan to safeguard her own interests. With the burdens of war pressing heavily on all classes abuse of Lodovico grew daily, and cries of "Marco" and "Trivulzio" began to be heard in the streets. The climax came on 30th August when Antonio Landriano, the Treasurer, was attacked and murdered by the mob, headed by one Simone Rigoni. Landriano had for long been intimate with Lodovico, and he had lately encouraged him to reject Louis XII.'s proposals, that Sforza should keep Milan for life in return for an annual tribute. Hence he was marked out for the victim of the storm of popular resentment which had arisen against the House of Sforza. Il Moro saw that his only chance of safety lay in flight. The

¹ Pélissier, *op. cit.*, vol. ii. ² *Op. cit.*

towns of his own dominions had proved unavailing as points of resistance to the French. Hence, still adhering to his original plan, Lodovico would retire with his sons to the mountains of Tyrol until he had collected sufficient forces to offer fresh resistance to the enemy. The Castello of Milan, well stocked with ammunition and supplies, would hold the French in check. Later, when the occasion arose, it would facilitate the Duke's return to his dominions. Final preparations were quickly carried through. Bernardino da Corte promised with every assurance of loyalty to hold the Castello for at least a month, and an elaborate system of signals was arranged by means of which he could communicate his wants to the outside world. The ducal treasure was packed on mules to be conveyed to Germany. The two little boys, Massimiliano and Francesco, started on ahead under the charge of their uncle, Ascanio, and of their governess, Camilla Sforza. At length on 2nd September Il Moro himself rode out of Milan, and accompanied by a little band of followers made his way to Como. Meanwhile Trivulzio had written to his cousin Erasmo that he would dine with him in Milan on the following day. On the very evening of Lodovico's departure he entered the city. Milan, without more ado, capitulated to the French.

Milan had indeed been won "with spurs of wood," and the speedy occupation of the capital produced an impression as to the power of the invader which prevented further resistance throughout the Duchy. "No defence avails against the might of the French," San Severino was reported to have said on his return from Alessandria. "If they wished to storm the gloomy city of Hades in quest of Proserpine and Eurydice, neither Cerberus nor Pluto would venture to resist them."¹ Genoa, Piacenza, Parma, one after the other, made a voluntary submission to Louis XII., who by the end of October had undisputed possession of the Duchy. Cremona and the Ghiarad'adda had, however, been occupied by the Venetians as their share of the spoils. Although the inhabitants, in their anxiety to remain Milanese, offered themselves to the French King, his promises to Venice forced him to turn a deaf ear to their entreaties. Meanwhile

¹ *Chroniques de Jean d'Auton*, vol. i.

Trivulzio concentrated all his efforts on the siege of the Castello of Milan. Yet the storming had hardly begun before his attempts to bribe the garrison into surrender succeeded beyond all expectation. On 13th September Bernardino da Corte signed a treaty by which he agreed to yield the Castello in twelve days, if no help came in the meantime, in return for a share of the treasures placed under his charge and an annual revenue of some 2,000 ducats.¹ All the captains and officials of the Castello, with one exception,² followed Da Corte's example, receiving pensions and privileges as the price of their treachery. Without even allowing the twelve days to elapse, Da Corte quitted the Castello on 17th September, while Trivulzio entered to install himself in Lodovico's own apartments. Two days later came a letter from Il Moro to Da Corte bidding "his dearest brother" take courage for he should soon be relieved.³ The letter fell into Trivulzio's hands, but with characteristic irony he took care that it should reach its proper destination. Such barefaced treachery earned for Da Corte the contempt of French and Italians alike. Louis XII. himself, when he visited the Castello "and saw how fine and strong it was and how well supplied with artillery, marvelled greatly and laid much blame upon that new Judas, Bernardino da Corte, saying that he should never have surrendered so well-constructed a fortress".⁴ The ex-Castellan hardly ventured to show his face in Milan, and he must needs retire to Asti where he spent the rest of his days in ignoble obscurity. On 6th October Louis XII. made his triumphal entry into Milan by the Porta Ticinese. His *baldacchino* was borne by the chief Milanese doctors, while the Dukes of Savoy and Ferrara, the Marquises of Mantua, Saluzzo and Montferrat rode in his train amid a crowd of Frenchmen and his now devoted ally, Cæsar Borgia. Through streets decorated with fleur-de-lys the King made his way to the Duomo, where representatives of the city gates were gathered under their various standards to do him honour. Milan rejoiced in the presence of her new ruler for the next

¹ Cf. Beltrami, L., *Castello di Milano*, p. 525.

² Domenego da Rizo, who fled to Germany.

³ Pélissier, vol. ii. ⁴ Paullo, A. da, *op. cit.*

month. During that time he did his best to court popularity. Louis XII. attended banquets given by Francesco Bernardino Visconti, by Francesco Trivulzio and by the Commune of Milan. He stood sponsor for Lodovico Borromeo's baby, visited its mother, and presented his godchild with a magnificent gold necklace. Every one was loud in his praises, and Jean d'Auton, who had accompanied his royal patron to Italy, could declare with truth that for the time being there was neither Guelph nor Ghibelline who was not a good Frenchman.

Meanwhile the fortunes of the exiled Duke contrasted sadly with the festivities which were being celebrated in his capital. During his flight from Italy he narrowly escaped falling into the hands of the French, who actually entered the suburbs of Como while Lodovico was still in the town. At Morbegno he fell in with the imperial escort which Maximilian had sent to his aid, but although he was henceforth free from danger, the welcome which he met with in Germany was anything but warm. Maximilian himself showed real sympathy, doing all in his power to further the interests of his ally.¹ The Diet, however, set their face against furnishing Sforza with effective aid, while towns such as Brixen and Innsbruck openly showed their dislike of receiving the fugitive within their walls. In the midst of these disappointments came the crushing news that the Castello had fallen. Lodovico's reception of the ill-tidings is thus graphically described by a chronicler: "Having read the letters and comprehended their evil contents, he stood without speaking as if he were dumb. Then at length, raising his eyes to heaven, he uttered these few words, 'From the time of Judas until to-day there has been no greater traitor than Bernardino da Corte'. For that day no other words passed his lips."² With the fall of the Castello was lost all chance of recovering Milan that year. Il Moro must needs resign himself to a winter in Germany, while he endeavoured

¹ In a letter from Brixen, dated 18th October, 1499, Lodovico wrote that "His Imperial Majesty . . . could not be more disposed or determined to restore us to our home, and to re-establish us in our authority and position". Cf. Decio, C., Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1902, p. 468.

² Grumello, A., *Cronaca Pavese*, 1467-1529.

to build up a new army from the scanty materials at his command. The time passed sadly enough. Lodovico was suffering throughout from bad attacks of gout and fever, while his discomfort was increased by the change from his sunny Lombardy to the cold mountain air of Tyrol. Attracted by the easy terms which Louis XII. offered to those who made a voluntary submission, the little band of Sforza adherents began to melt away. Those who remained grew discontented and quarrelsome, while even the children's governess, Camilla, who hankered after the flesh-pots of Milan, added to Il Moro's trials by her constant repinings. With the New Year, however, hope dawned again. So long as Louis XII. remained in the Duchy, French rule prospered, but he had not long departed before a reaction set in. Trivulzio's government, identified as it was with the Guelphic party, soon incurred the dislike of the nobles, while the people found that the burden of taxation pressed even more heavily upon them than under Lodovico. In the eyes of the Milanese, moreover, the cession of Cremona and the Ghiarad'adda to Venice was "an undue spoiling of the Duchy," while the quartering of French soldiers on private houses proved a constant source of grievance. The malcontents were secretly encouraged by Ligny and the French Chancellor, Pierre de Saverges, who, in their jealousy of Trivulzio, wished nothing better than that his position in Milan should be rendered intolerable. Hence by the end of the year all mourned for Sforza. Messages or letters began to pour in upon Lodovico offering him every support if he would only return to his unhappy subjects. At the same time Galeazzo Visconti could announce the successful issue of his visit to Switzerland. Louis XII. had given little effective aid to the Swiss in their war with Maximilian. The mercenaries in Lombardy were irregularly paid. Above all, the Cantons had received no guarantee as to their much-prized commerce with Milan. Thus the Cantons agreed to abandon the French King and to supply 10,000 soldiers for the cause of Sforza. Lodovico's own treasure enabled him to enlist a certain number of German infantry besides the troops furnished by Maximilian. These, with some Stradiot light horse and the Italian forces

upon which he could reckon, brought Il Moro's army up to between 20,000 and 30,000 men. "Our affairs are in excellent condition," he wrote to Ippolito d'Este in January, "and we have a most certain hope of soon coming to acts."¹

The news of Lodovico's preparations at once spread through the Duchy, evoking general enthusiasm for the House of Sforza. Bellinzona turned against its French garrison and insisted upon giving free passage to Il Moro's troops. Ligny was forced to abandon Como, who threw open her gates to the advance guard under Galeazzo San Severino and Ascanio Sforza. Frate Landriano, the General of the Umiliati, worked his hardest to stir up the Milanese. Thanks to his efforts, by 30th January the capital was in full revolt. With Sforza adherents elected as the heads of the city gates, and with every child who was old enough to speak shouting "Moro," Trivulzio realised that it was time to depart. The drama of September was repeated with the parts reversed, and Trivulzio left Milan for Novara on the same day (3rd February) that Ascanio Sforza entered the city. Two days later Lodovico himself rode in at the Porta Nuova, "looking younger than ever," his friends assured themselves, and amid enthusiasm which made the Mantuan ambassador declare that "if the walls, the trees and the earth had possessed voices, they too would have cried 'Moro! Moro!'"² Among those who accompanied Lodovico along his joyful road to the Duomo, there must have been some who remembered Francesco Sforza's triumphal entry at the Porta Nuova just fifty years before, and who looked to the day's events to lay the foundations of another period of peace and prosperity under Sforza rule.

Lodovico's months of exile seemed to have effaced all remembrance of his former unpopularity. He was a Sforza and therefore dear to the hearts of the Milanese, who spared no pains to raise the funds necessary for the re-establishment of his rule. "It is touching," wrote the Ferrarese ambassador, "to see the self-sacrifice and devotion of all this people."³ By means of voluntary subscriptions, to which nearly all the corporations contributed, some 20,000 ducats a month were

¹ Pélissier, *op. cit.*, vol. ii. ² *Op. cit.* ³ *Op. cit.*

placed at Lodovico's disposal. To supplement this the ducal crown and jewels were pawned, and even the treasures of the churches were thrown into the war fund. There was everything to be gained by haste, as a fresh army was known to be mustering in France, and if Trivulzio could only be driven from Italy before its arrival a great advantage would be won. Hence Lodovico spent but a single day in Milan, and leaving Ascanio to carry on the siege of the Castello, he set out in pursuit of the French. In spite of the opposition of the natives, who cut bridges and threw trees across the roads, Trivulzio had made good his retreat to Novara. Then, leaving a strong garrison in the town, he had concentrated the main French force in the neighbourhood of Mortara. By the end of February these two places alone remained to the French while Lodovico was before Novara concentrating all efforts on the siege. At length, on 22nd March, Novara capitulated. The news was received in Milan with the utmost rejoicing, and all hailed the approach of the day when the Alps would once more act as barriers between France and Italy. Yet the fall of Novara was to prove the last of Lodovico's successes. During the weeks spent over the siege his army had gradually diminished and his funds had run short, while on the other hand the French forces had increased. Galeazzo San Severino had let Ives d'Allègre, who had been aiding Cæsar Borgia in Romagna, slip past him to rejoin Trivulzio at Mortara. Louis XII., although he could obtain no official aid from the Cantons, had by a plentiful scattering of French gold obtained a large supply of Swiss volunteers for the Lombard campaign. Worst of all, on 24th March La Trémouille arrived at the head of the new French army to bring fresh courage and discipline into Trivulzio's camp. The Milanese troops had for some time been clamorous for pay, and Lodovico, fearing to earn for himself a bad name, had refused to satisfy them by allowing a sack of Novara. Hence he was forced to return to Milan for more supplies, thereby forfeiting his last chance of an encounter with the French before La Trémouille's arrival. On Lodovico's return to the camp, the French, having no longer anything to gain by delay, moved on Novara to give him battle. On 8th

April a fiasco, which cannot be dignified with the name of battle, sealed the fate of the House of Sforza. The Swiss in Lodovico's service refused to fight against their countrymen, and the next day Swiss and Germans alike sought safe-conducts from Trivulzio in order that they might return home. Il Moro, disguised as a Swiss pikeman, hoped to make good his escape. But as the Swiss filed past the French camp, he was discovered, thanks to the information furnished in return for a substantial bribe by one of the mercenaries, and to his own pale face and distinguished appearance, which marked him out for detection. "Poor Lodovico," wrote Morone, "could not change his features nor his majestic expression and princely bearing, therefore he was recognised and taken in spite of his changed clothes."¹ Lodovico made his surrender to Ligny who confined him provisionally to the Castello of Novara, while a courier was sent flying to Venice to acquaint the Doge with the "good news that Signor Lodovico Sforza has been taken by the French".²

Throughout the Novara campaign the French garrison in the Castello of Milan had shown a determination with which Da Corte's prompt surrender contrasted sadly. Ascanio Sforza had pressed the siege by every means in his power. He had cut off the canal which turned the Castello mill, and he had flooded the cellars stored with provisions and ammunition. Nevertheless, the Castellan, S. Quentin, continued to hold out until, on 10th April, the news from the main seat of war ended the siege and enabled the French to occupy Milan without resistance. Well might Machiavelli exclaim against the uselessness of fortresses, when the first siege withstood by the Castello Sforzesco was conducted by a member of the House for whose glory and protection it had been erected.

On 17th April Lodovico Il Moro set out for France under Ligny's escort. He was so ill that he was obliged to travel the greater part of the way in a litter, while the Venetian ambassador, who saw him as he rode through Lyons, predicted confidently that his days would be few. Lodovico remained for about a fortnight in the Castle of Pierre Encise at Lyons. Although Louis XII. turned a deaf ear to his request for an

¹ Verri, *Storia di Milano*, vol. ii, ² Pélissier, *op. cit.*, vol. ii,

interview, he appears to have been otherwise honourably treated. The sensational reports as to the iron cage which was being constructed for his reception seem to have originated with the Venetian ambassador, and they prove nothing save the invincible hatred borne by the Venetians towards their fallen foe. From Lyons Lodovico was removed to the fortress of Lys-Saint Georges in Berry, where he remained for the next four years. He was allowed to keep his faithful follower, Pier Francesco da Pontremoli, and two other Italians in his service, and to receive certain communications from the outside world. Maximilian made persistent efforts for his friend's release. Although these proved unavailing he eventually procured his removal to Loches, where the prisoner enjoyed considerably more liberty. In the spring of 1508, however, Lodovico made an attempt at escape. Having bribed one of his keepers he succeeded in passing the castle gates hidden in a cart load of straw, only to lose his way in the woods round Loches and to be brought back to stricter captivity. Even in his direst misfortune Lodovico's love of art and literature did not fail him. The sole request which he had made on leaving Italy as a prisoner was for a copy of Dante's *Divine Comedy* from the library at Pavia. Now when books and papers were denied to him, he occupied the tedious hours in covering the walls of his dungeon with mottoes and designs. But Il Moro had only a few weeks more to live, and on 17th May, 1508, the end came. Various traditions survive as to his place of burial, and of these one would fain believe the account given by the historian of S. Maria delle Grazie.¹ The friars of this convent, he relates, remembering all that Lodovico had done for them in former years, contrived to bring his body back to Milan and to bury him in their own church by his wife's side. So died Lodovico Sforza in his fifty-seventh year. In the opinion of a recent writer,² the keynotes of his character were fear and ambition. This being so, the conflicting operation of these two motives may well account for his failure. Lodovico's refusal to allow the sack of Novara in March, 1500, is, in this respect, typical of

¹ Gattico, *Storia di Santa Maria delle Grazie*.

² Segre, A., *op. cit.* Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1902.

his whole career. By means of the sack he might have avoided delay in attacking the enemy, and delay at that juncture was fatal. Ambition sufficed with him, as it would have done with his father, to outweigh any qualms of conscience. Yet, whereas Francesco would have ordered the sack without a moment's hesitation, Lodovico's fear of the possible consequences rendered him unable to act decisively. He preferred to run no risks and to seek fresh supplies in Milan. When he returned the moment for action had passed, never to return. Fear and ambition were not, however, the only elements of conflict in Lodovico's career. He stands forth on the stage of history as a man both sinned against and sinning, a tragic personality in whom the forces of good and evil were inextricably intertwined. He made for himself bitter enemies and devoted friends. He broke faith with others and was in his turn betrayed. He ruled the Duchy of Milan as a usurper, yet he ruled it well and wisely. He combined, in short, the faults and failings of the Renaissance with its real merits and its subtle charm. A bad man, undoubtedly, but a man who, in his own day, proved capable of inspiring devotion, and whom, seen even in the cold light of posterity, it is easier to forgive than to condemn.

The fall of Il Moro carried with it the captivity or exile of practically every member of the House of Sforza. Cardinal Ascanio, who on his brother's capture had fled from Milan with a body of horse, fell in with some Venetian forces near Piacenza and was taken prisoner by their captain, Soncino Benzone of Crema. After some delay he was taken to France and confined at Bourges until his release, in 1503, enabled him to play a brief although active part in Italian politics before his death. In the autumn of 1499 Lodovico had wished Francesco, the infant son of Gian Galeazzo, to accompany his own children to Germany. Isabella had, however, refused to let him go, with the result that the *Duchetto*, as the Milanese called him, was promptly separated from his mother by Louis XII. and despatched to France to be brought up as a monk. Thereupon Isabella retired with her two daughters to Bari where she spent the remainder of her life. Ernes Sforza, who was among the prisoners taken to

France in April, 1500, subsequently obtained his release through the intercession of his sister, the Queen of the Romans. He then retired to the Court of Innsbruck where his cousins, Massimiliano and Francesco, had remained since their father's departure for Italy, and which was to form the refuge of many loyal Sforzeschi during the next few years. Even Caterina Sforza and the Lord of Pesaro shared the misfortunes of their Milanese cousins. Cæsar Borgia had opened his career in Romagna by possessing himself of Imola and Forlì and by sending Caterina a prisoner to Rome. In the autumn of 1500 he marched on Pesaro and Giovanni Sforza fled at his approach. It seemed indeed as though the history of the Sforza were closed. Yet such was the tenacity with which the Italians clung to their native lords, that, in spite of the catastrophe which had overwhelmed their House, two Sforza Dukes were yet to reign in Milan.

On the news of the rebellion of Milan, Louis XII. had sent Cardinal d'Amboise to Italy to act as his representative. Thus to him fell the task of pacification now that the movement had collapsed. The Milanese realised that their cause would be best served by abject submission. Hence, when Amboise entered Milan on 17th April, the citizens knelt bareheaded in the streets praying for forgiveness, while bands of children passed in procession before the Cardinal crying "France, mercy". Louis XII. had determined to be as conciliatory as possible, and Amboise was able to promise pardon in return for a fine of 800,000 crowns. This was subsequently reduced to 300,000, of which only rather more than half was paid, the rest being remitted at the request of the French Queen. It was natural, under the circumstances, that the possessions of those who had played a prominent part in the rebellion should be used as rewards for the French generals. Thus to Trivulzio fell Vigevano with the title of Marquis, Ligny received Galeazzo San Severino's lands at Verme, while Cardinal d'Amboise occupied Lodovico's vast estates in the Lomellina. Yet Italians such as the Borromei, who had aided the French cause, were not forgotten, while many of the leading rebels were afterwards reconciled with the French King. Among these was Galeazzo San Severino, who, after living in exile at Innsbruck until all

chance of Il Moro's release was gone, returned to Milan in 1504, to become a royal favourite and to be made Master of the Horse to Louis XII. in the following year.

Such constitutional changes as were introduced by the French dated from Louis XII.'s ordinance on the general administration of the Duchy in November, 1499.¹ This document endowed the Lieutenant-General with supreme military and political authority throughout the Duchy, while at the same time it created a Senate, partly French and partly Italian, which should act as a check upon the royal Lieutenant. The Senate was composed of fourteen members (two ecclesiastics, four soldiers and eight lawyers) presided over by a Chancellor, the Italian members being chosen from those holding the office of Ducal Councillor at that time. As the limitation in numbers prevented all the existing Councillors from obtaining a seat, those who were excluded were allowed to retain their honours and to fill the places of any Senators who might be absent from Milan. The connection between the Senate and the Councils is also seen in the stipulation that the new body should sit twice a day except on festivals "as did the old Councils".² The Senate inherited many of its attributes from the Councils, as, for instance, its supreme judicial authority and its control over the University of Pavia. Owing, however, to Louis XII.'s desire to bridle the power of the Lieutenant-General, it enjoyed a position of independence unknown to either Council under the old regime. Whereas the Councillors formerly held office at the will of the Duke, a member of the Senate could only be removed by the vote of his colleagues. No royal edicts or grants of privileges were valid until registered by the Senate, from whose decrees there was no appeal save for revision by the same body. These modifications have been used to draw a sharp distinction between the Senate and the Ducal Councils. The Councils, it has been maintained, were instruments of the despotism, while the chief function of the Senate was to bridle the power of the royal Lieutenant.³ Important as were the new attributes of

¹ Péliissier, L. G., *Documents pour l'histoire de la domination française dans le Milanais* (1499-1500), No. 11.

² Del Giudice, *op. cit.* ³ Crespi, A. L., *Del Senato in Milano*.

the Senate, this distinction can easily be pressed too far. Although the Councils owed their origin to the Duke, they had come, in practice, to be regarded as a check upon his absolutism. Thus Louis XII. had only to reform the Councils upon a recognised French model to produce just that feature in the Constitution which he desired. In 1500 the Senate was revived to remain practically unchanged until the end of the eighteenth century. Yet the old tendencies of the Milanese Constitution were still at work. As early as 1513 mention is made of the Secret Senate,¹ the consulting committee of the Duke or Governor, which, like Simonetta's Secret Council of the Castello, tended to absorb the chief work of government to the detriment of the larger and more independent body.

In October, 1498, Il Moro had ordered the reform of the Statutes of Milan, which had been first promulgated by Gian Galeazzo Visconti. Now on the petition of the citizens, the task was continued by Cardinal Amboise, assisted by the Senate and the College of Jurisprudence. In April, 1502, the result of their labours was published by a royal diploma for observance throughout the Duchy.

Louis XII. realised the importance of establishing personal relations between himself and his new subjects. In the summer of 1502 he made a royal progress through the Duchy which did much to reconcile the inhabitants to his rule. Early in July the King arrived at Asti. With him came the Benedictine chronicler, Jean d'Auton, eager to notice the distinguishing features of a country which now formed part of the French dominions. Through his eyes it is possible to view the Duchy of Milan, as it were, from the outside. From Asti Louis XII. set out for Milan, pausing for a few days at Vigevano and then proceeding by way of Abbiategrasso and the Naviglio Grande to the capital. "On either side of the canal," d'Auton describes, "are great leafy guelder-rose bushes which shade the passers-by; from both banks stretch beautiful green meadows full of fruit-trees and with little brooks running through them. Magnificent pleasure-houses and villas are built upon

¹ Archivio di Stato di Milano, *Documenti Diplomatici, Dominio Sforzesco, Signoria-Duca Massimiliano.*

the water's edge, while draw-bridges connect one side of the stream with the other. Between the trees and the canal on both sides are sanded paths for the convenience of foot passengers and horses. Small fish of every kind abound. And I was told," he adds, "that Signor Lodovico had thus pleased to lay out the district, which is indeed so attractive and pleasant that it savours more of Paradise than of earth."¹ In Milan the beauty of the ladies and the splendour of their apparel is what chiefly attracts d'Auton's notice. "More delightful to the eyes than the rays of the morning sun," the worthy Frenchman describes them, while the ladies of Genoa appeared to him "more like nymphs and goddesses than human women". Neither their heavy robes nor the jewels with which they were loaded prevented the ladies of Lombardy from taking active exercise in the form of dancing. At a great ball given by Trivulzio, on the occasion of Louis XII.'s visit to Italy in 1507, Jean d'Auton tells how the hostess was ready to receive her guests at "ten o'clock in the morning".² In less than two hours' time the King arrived to find some 1,200 ladies present, and they then danced without stopping until evening, when the banquet was spread. From Milan the King made his way to Pavia, where d'Auton waxes eloquent over the glories of the Castello, the Park, the Certosa, the University and the "thousand other beautiful and interesting monuments"³ which he saw there. Then at the special request of the citizens, Louis XII. visited Genoa, "one of the proudest cities in the world," which, if he could only keep it, would render the Most Christian King master not only of the earth but of the sea. At the end of August the French King started on his homeward journey, taking with him the sons of some of the principal Lombard nobility as a proof of his regard for his new subjects.

During the two months which Louis XII. spent in the Duchy of Milan his power in Italy was at its zenith. The conquest of Milan had been followed by that of Naples. In 1501, the armies of France and Spain combined to drive out the illegitimate line of Aragon, in the person of King Federico, and

¹ *Chroniques de Jean d'Auton*, vol. ii., p. 187.

² *Op. cit.*, vol. iv., p. 87. ³ Vol. ii., p. 195.

to divide the Southern Kingdom between them. Louis XII.'s own successes, moreover, were only rivalled by those of his ally, Cæsar Borgia, who, in three successive campaigns, had made himself master of the Romagnol towns and was now threatening Florence. Hence the smaller Italian princes gathered round Louis XII., both from fear of the certain destruction which would await the enemies of France, and in order to gain the support of the only power which could save them from Cæsar Borgia's clutches. Princes such as the Duke of Urbino and the Marquis of Mantua who, as Jean d'Auton puts it, "hated the Duke of Valentinois like poison," did their best to turn the French King against Cæsar. When it appeared that the latter did not hesitate to attack even the allies of France, there was a temporary coolness between him and Louis. Cæsar, however, could not yet afford to quarrel with his royal patron. Hence he rode post-haste to Milan, arriving late at night to meet the King returning by torchlight from a supper in the city. For the rest of his stay in Lombardy Cæsar used every means in his power to ingratiate himself with the French King. Whenever Louis XII. wished to dismount, Cæsar was at hand to hold his horse's bridle. The monarch would soon go nowhere without him, and when they at length parted at Asti, the friendship between them was stronger than ever. Meanwhile many Cardinals and high ecclesiastics came to pay their respects to Louis XII. and to make lavish promises as to the support which they would give the French candidate for the Papacy in the event of Alexander VI.'s death. It seemed as though Georges d'Amboise had every hope of succeeding the present Pope. According to Jean d'Auton he already looked forward to the day when he should see the apostolic keys "dangling from his girdle".

In spite of the schemes which had already been laid with a view to that event, Alexander VI.'s death in August, 1503, was sufficiently unexpected to ruin his son's career and to throw the Sacred College into confusion. Cæsar Borgia's possessions melted even more rapidly than they had been acquired, and his fiery figure vanished from the stage of Italian history. Meanwhile Georges d'Amboise hurried from France to Rome, bring-



Anderson

ASCANIO SFORZA
FRESCO ASCRIBED TO LUINI
Castello Sforzesco, Milan

ing with him Ascanio Sforza in order that his influence might be used to secure votes for the French Cardinal. Ascanio, however, once his own master, did not intend to further the interests of one who had till recently been his gaoler. Fortified by his position as Vice-Chancellor and by 100,000 ducats, "with which," a chronicler cynically remarks, "to buy the voice of the Holy Spirit," he was mainly instrumental in securing the election of the Cardinal of Siena. For one short month Ascanio dominated papal policy, until his schemes for using his influence to further the cause of Sforza were nipped in the bud by the death of the new Pope Pius III. When Giuliano della Rovere assumed the tiara as Julius II., it was clear that the Papacy would serve the interests of neither Amboise nor Sforza unless they should chance to coincide with those of the powerful and ambitious occupant of the Chair of S. Peter. Ascanio, however, did not give up hope. He had obtained Pius III.'s absolution from his promise to return to France after the election, and he remained in Rome awaiting the opportunity to strike a blow at the enemies of his House. The political atmosphere at this date was by no means unfavourable to a movement which was directed against French power in Italy. Amboise's failure to win the Apostolic See was followed by the battle of the Garigliano, when Louis XII. reaped the reward of his folly in bringing into Italy "a most powerful stranger," who was strong enough to act as his rival. The complete victory of the Spaniards on this occasion forced the French to evacuate all that remained to them of Neapolitan territory. Ferdinand of Aragon remained sole possessor of the Kingdom of Naples, which in his hands might well prove a formidable rival to the French Duchy of Milan. Both Julius II. and the Venetians, moreover, began to see in France a serious obstacle to their policy of territorial expansion. Hence, when the illness of Louis XII. in 1505 furnished Ascanio Sforza with a suitable occasion for carrying out his designs, he obtained secret aid from Spain while the Papacy and Venice smiled on his undertaking. Ascanio enlisted the services of the *condottiere*, Bartolommeo d'Alviano, who was to render an attempt to restore the Medici to Florence the prelude of an attack on Milan.

Thus the happy days before 1494 would be revived, and Italy would rejoice under the rule of her native lords. When all arrangements had been made, Louis XII., who was held to be dying, made a marvellous recovery. Almost at the same time Ascanio Sforza caught the plague and died in Rome after three days' illness. Bereft of its leader the scheme dwindled into an abortive attack on Florence on the part of d'Alviano. "So," muses Guicciardini, "are the designs of men vain and fallacious."¹

After the death of Ascanio, Louis XII. could have little to fear from the House of Sforza for several years to come. Yet it was not long ere he was confronted with fresh difficulties in the shape of a rebellion in Genoa. The cause of the revolt lay less in disloyalty to France than in the interminable strife of nobles and people within the city. An insult on the part of one of the Spinola towards a member of the popular party formed the occasion for riots which, owing to the bad management of the French governor, assumed serious proportions. The impression that France was against them gained ground among the democrats. In a short time their cry of "*Francia*" was changed into that of "*popolo*". A dyer called Paolo da Novi was elected as Doge, the French garrison was driven from the Castelletto and the popular cause reigned supreme. Louis XII. thereupon determined to stamp out the rebellion in person, and in April, 1507, he arrived before Genoa. Within three days the city made an unconditional surrender. Paolo da Novi fled to Corsica to be subsequently caught and executed, while the French King entered Genoa in triumph. Here Louis XII. administered punishment to the rebel city in the shape of a heavy fine and the withdrawal of her privileges. He then withdrew to Milan to celebrate his conspicuous success by a round of festivities. The rebellion and its suppression by the French King in person occasioned general alarm among the Powers of Italy. Julius II. was a native of Savona, who belonged by birth to the popular party in Genoa, and his sympathy with the rebels was well known. The news of Louis

¹ Op. ined., vol. iii., p. 317.

XII.'s coming found him at Bologna, from whence he hurried back to Rome, announcing that his doctor had ordered him immediate change of air. His apprehensions were shared by Venice, who had everything to fear from the increased strength of her neighbour in Lombardy, and by Ferdinand of Aragon, whom the close commercial intercourse between Genoa and Spain rendered peculiarly sensitive to the fate of that city. More directly antagonistic to French rule was Maximilian, King of the Romans. In 1501 Louis XII. had recognised the imperial rights over Milan by agreeing to buy the investiture for 200,000 francs. At the same time Claude of France was betrothed to Maximilian's grandson, the future Charles V., on the understanding that they should rule Milan if Louis XII. died without heirs male. Four years later Louis XII., thinking that his end was near, made a will which ignored this bargain and which left Francis of Angoulême heir to the Duchy of Milan as well as to the throne of France. Maximilian was naturally indignant, while the affair at Genoa added to the list of his grievances. Genoa was an imperial city, and during the rebellion the citizens had appealed to Maximilian for aid. Thus he regarded the suppression of the revolt as a fresh insult to his dignity. He determined to set out for Rome in order to receive the imperial crown. With this end in view he appealed to the Diet of Constance for an army with which to defend Italy and the Empire from the designs of Louis XII.

The rebellion of Genoa emphasised the growing opposition to French rule in Italy. Yet, great as was the fear of France, the fear and hatred of Venice was still greater. She alone of all the Italian Powers had gained rather than lost by the French invasions. Her possession of Cremona and the Ghiarad'adda was hotly resented in Milan. Her expansion in the Romagna brought her into contact with Julius II. Her occupation of the Apulian coast-towns threatened the ruler of Naples. Even from the smaller States, such as Mantua and Ferrara, towns and territories had been filched by the rapacious Republic. Hence, if the attitude of the Powers towards France after the rebellion of Genoa foreshadowed the Holy League, the forces which produced the League of Cambrai were also in operation. Italy

was in quest of a scapegoat. It was not yet clear whether France or Venice would first be selected to fill that office.

Save for the isolated case of Genoa, the Duchy of Milan had apparently acquiesced in French rule. During Louis XII.'s illness the Lieutenant-General had taken the precaution of provisioning the fortresses against attack, but even the rumour of the King's death produced little open revolt. During the years which followed Il Moro's fall, Milan suffered heavily both from plague and famine, while the brutalities of the French soldiers quartered on them called forth a perpetual wail from the capital and the subject-towns. Ere long, however, the Duchy recovered from the effects of the war, and signs of renewed prosperity began to appear. Whereas in October, 1499, the export of grain to Cremona was forbidden on the ground that the Duchy had not sufficient for its own wants, an edict of August, 1508, announced that Milan produced each year far more than was necessary for its own consumption, and that the export of the surplus was henceforth to be encouraged.¹ Moreover, the numerous notices of trade-gilds, especially of the cloth and silk weavers and of the wool merchants, show that trade continued to flourish under the French. The ruin of Milanese trade came during the last years of Louis XII.'s rule, when the League of Cambrai forced the Duchy to bear fresh war burdens, while, by cutting off all communication with Venice, it robbed Milanese merchants of their best market. Nevertheless, the atmosphere of Milan, even before the League of Cambrai, was far from settled. Da Paullo waxes eloquent over the arbitrary behaviour of the French Captain of Justice who would arrest some poor artisan on his way home from work on the pretext that he carried no light, in order to extort from him a ransom. He also relates how a workman was fined twenty-five ducats for exclaiming on the Piazza, "It is impossible to remain as we are". A curious document addressed by the Venetian ambassador to the Council of Ten in September, 1504,² shows both the real antipathy of the Duchy towards the French and the reasons which prevented this

¹ Pélissier, *Documents*, etc., Nos, 6 and 64.

² Pélissier, *op. cit.*, etc., No, 29.

antipathy from expressing itself in open rebellion. Almost all the Lombards, according to the Venetian, were Trivulzio's enemies, but so long as the latter remained in Milan, well supplied with soldiers and money, he would have no reason to fear. The bulk of the opposition to French rule sprang from the Ghibellines whose riches and influence had been greatly diminished by the penalties imposed on them, and who were, moreover, divided into at least three separate groups, each looking askance at the others. For the rest Milan was "a city which contained many people and few men". There were none who possessed either the means or the determination to face the consequences of rebellion. Cowed by the disasters of 1500 and her strength wasted by internal strife, Milan had ceased to have an independent policy. She could only accept such changes of government as the conflicting ambitions of foreign powers should force upon her.

CHAPTER IX

MASSIMILIANO SFORZA AND THE SWISS CONFEDERATION

(1508—1515)

THE final overthrow of Lodovico Il Moro had been brought about by the Swiss, and it was their pikes which upheld his son Maximilian during the three troubled years of his reign in Milan. Hence the wearisome fluctuations of Swiss policy, during the period that intervened, gain an importance which they would not otherwise possess. In them lies the clue to the process which transformed the betrayers of one member of the House of Sforza into the guardians of another. At the same time they form the prelude to what is perhaps the most curious episode in the history of Milan, an episode which seemed about to determine the fate of the Duchy, once and for all, by turning it into a Swiss Canton.

Two main causes are responsible for the concern of the Swiss in the affairs of Milan at this time.¹ In the first place it was a matter of vital necessity to that nation that its all-important commerce in Lombardy should be placed on a sure basis. If to such Cantons as Zurich and Bern the connection with Milan formed the chief source of their commercial prosperity, to the Forest Cantons it was practically a matter of life and death. To close the passes of the Alps against them would be to cut them off from their chief food supply. Throughout the fifteenth century the Swiss had aimed at obtaining permanent control over two of the chief Alpine routes by the acquisition of Bellinzona and Domodossola. Bellinzona, as the modern traveller knows well,

¹ Cf. Kohler, C., *Les Suisses dans les guerres d'Italie* (1506-1512), which forms the chief authority for the relations between the Swiss and Milan at this period.

bars the entrance into Italy by the S. Gotthard and the Val Leventina, while Domodossola guards the Simplon. Hence if the Swiss held these two fortresses, they would no longer be at the mercy of the ruler of Milan. In the confusion which followed the death of Gian Galeazzo Visconti, the Swiss captured both towns only to be driven from them by Filippo Maria's captains in 1422. Again, during the last quarter of the century, the disturbed State of Milan in 1478 formed the occasion of a Swiss attack on Bellinzona, while nine years later the men of Valais laid siege to Domodossola. Both these attempts failed, and the Swiss were forced to content themselves with favourable commercial treaties with the Dukes of Milan, as a means of keeping the gates of Lombardy open to them. They remained in close alliance with the House of Sforza until, as has been already noticed, Lodovico's closing of the passes in 1499 drove them into the arms of France. The Swiss, however, were not only traders, they were also a nation of mercenaries. In this capacity they were brought into close connection with the French. Ever since Swiss arms had overthrown the great enemy of Louis XI. at Nancy, Switzerland had been regarded as the recruiting ground of the Kings of France. A system of pensions to the Governments of each Canton and to influential individuals had taught the Swiss the value of French gold, so that, unless they were themselves at war, a large body of mercenaries were at the French King's disposal, whenever he required their services. Thus the treaty of 1499 between Louis XII. and the Swiss Cantons seemed as though it would serve a double purpose. The Swiss would continue to act as the mercenaries of France while their commerce would be safeguarded by their friendly relations with the new ruler of Milan. Yet it soon became clear that the French occupation of Milan rendered the passage of the Alps even more precarious than it had been under the Sforza Dukes. Hence a party grew up among the Swiss which opposed the French alliance on the ground that it turned their countrymen into hirelings and ran counter to the true interests of the nation. The part played by the Swiss in the history of Milan during the next fifteen years resulted from the struggles of this party against the

demoralising influence of French gold, which blinded the eyes and limited the ambitions of a large portion of the nation.

The first contest between the two parties in Switzerland produced the catastrophe of Novara, when the troops furnished by the Swiss authorities to Il Moro refused to fight against the volunteers who had joined Louis XII. On their way home some of the Swiss took the opportunity to seize Bellinzona, and when, in obedience to the complaints of Louis XII., the Helvetic Diet weakly called on them to yield the town, the members of the Forest Cantons stood firm. In alliance with the discontented mercenaries, who had not received their full payment for the Novara campaign, they twice invaded the Milanese until Louis XII. was forced to buy peace at the price of Bellinzona. The French King in June, 1503, renewed the commercial treaties which had existed between the Swiss and the Sforza Dukes, and ceded Bellinzona in perpetuity, whence it remains to-day a Swiss town. At the same time the mercenaries received enough money to induce them to abandon further claims. Thus both parties were satisfied, and for several years to come nothing occurred to break the amicable relations existing between the Cantons and Louis XII. Nevertheless, when in the spring of 1508 Maximilian prepared to invade Italy, he could congratulate himself on having secured the services of the Swiss. By the treaty of 1499 the mercenaries in French service were not bound to fight against an imperial city. Hence at the time of the rebellion of Genoa, Louis XII. asked for a levy of 4,000 infantry without mentioning the purpose for which the troops were required. Maximilian took care to supply this deficiency, and his entreaties that they should be loyal to the Empire induced the Swiss authorities to order the troops, which had already set out for Italy, not to proceed farther than the Po. The order arrived too late to prevent the Swiss contingent from playing an important part in the reduction of Genoa. Thereupon the anti-French party in Switzerland once more became prominent. A deputation attended the Diet of Constance, where it was agreed both to recall the mercenaries from Lombardy and to levy 6,000 Swiss for Maximilian's Italian expedition. With the French King de-

prived of his best infantry, the invasion had every prospect of success, and Maximilian was reported to be "as happy as if he had conquered a province".¹ The two Sforza boys came to Constance, where they were enthusiastically received by the many Milanese exiles who had gathered there. At the same time the report of Maximilian's speedy arrival before Milan at the head of an army caused no small alarm to the French. Once more, however, the bribes scattered broadcast among the Swiss by Louis XII.'s agents paralysed the action of the Government. The Diet declined to let Maximilian's levy set out, lest a part of the nation should insist on going to the aid of the French, and the fiasco of Novara should thus be repeated. Hence Maximilian was forced to embark on the expedition without Swiss aid, complaining, as he did so, that "Louis XII. had too many crowns for people to dispute profitably with him".² In Italy fresh disappointments awaited him. With his usual happy confidence Maximilian had made sure of the active support of Venice, but, far from aiding him, the Republic refused to grant a free passage to his armies. After a feeble move on Vicenza by the Val Sugana, Maximilian retired to Botzen, while the remainder of his troops were routed in the Friuli by Bartolommeo d'Alviano. The only result of the expedition was the empty title of Emperor-Elect which Julius II. granted to Maximilian on his failure to reach Rome.

Louis XII.'s peaceable return to France in July, 1507, without having attacked either Empire or Papacy, produced a reaction in his favour among the Powers of Italy. From henceforth Venice became the chief object of their animosity. On his way home Louis XII. had an interview with Ferdinand of Aragon at Savona, when the Spanish monarch promised to act as mediator between Louis and Maximilian in order that all three might join hands against the Venetians. His task was facilitated by the "shameful truce" with Venice, which ended Maximilian's Italian expedition. The Emperor, eager for revenge, made common cause with the French King, who, in spite of the aid which he had furnished to Venice, had not been consulted as to the terms of the truce. When the European

¹ Kohler, *op. cit.* ² *Ibid.*

monarchs led the way the Italian princes followed, and in December, 1508, the League of Cambrai was formed. Pope, Emperor, France, Spain, Ferrara and Mantua allied in order to reduce the Venetians to the position of "humble fishermen," and to divide the territories of the Republic among themselves.

From the point of view of Milan the War of Cambrai is chiefly important for the ruin which it brought to the prosperity of the Duchy, and from the fact that it witnessed the final breach between Louis XII. and the Swiss. On the conclusion of the League a Venetian ambassador crossed the Alps to seek not merely a levy of Swiss mercenaries, but an equal alliance between the two Republics against the tyrants who hated them and their liberty. The offer tempted the Cantons in more ways than one. They had not been included in the League of Cambrai, and they feared that it might prove the occasion of an attempt to wrest Bellinzona from their grasp. Moreover, the idea of conquering Lombardy in alliance with Venice instead of figuring in Italy solely as the hired servants of France, appealed to the more independent party in the nation. Yet, while the Swiss were still hesitating, came the news of the disastrous defeat of the Venetians at the Ghiarad'adda in May, 1509. When Venice was reduced to such despair as to contemplate abandoning once and for all her mainland dominions, the Swiss alliance had passed out of the sphere of practical politics. Nevertheless, the mere fact that such an alliance had been mooted made the Cantons look coldly on Louis XII.'s proposal to renew the old arrangement as to the supply of mercenaries embodied in the treaty of 1499. The French King, elated by his success and bent on reducing his expenses, was not in the mood to pander to the ambitions of the Swiss. Hence the breach gradually widened, and the anti-French party in Switzerland, headed by Matthias Schinner, Archbishop of Sion, grew bolder. This remarkable prelate had asked too high a price for his services from the French King. In rejecting them Louis XII. had made an implacable enemy, who did not rest until he had driven the French from Italy.

In February, 1510, Julius II. brought about a new phase in the War of Cambrai by suddenly changing sides. Having

obtained his share of Venetian territory, he proceeded to forgive the erring Republic and to join with her against the French. Through the influence of Schinner, the Pope was able to engage some 10,000 Swiss mercenaries, nominally to be used in the papal attack on Ferrara, but who would, Julius hoped, become embroiled with the French on their march across Lombardy. With regard to this last point Julius II. obtained his wish. Yet the expedition proved a complete failure. The Swiss found their passage hindered by French troops, while the inhabitants of the Duchy showed no sympathy with an attack made in the interests of the Papacy and Venice. At the end of September the mercenaries had got hardly farther than Como, from whence they retired to Bellinzona under a volley of papal abuse at their ill-success. In the reaction which followed the Swiss would probably have come to terms with France had it not been for the Forest Cantons. They, however, indignant at Louis XII.'s recent exclusion of their merchants from Lombardy and at the repeated enlistment of mercenaries by French agents against the orders of the Government, secured the final rejection of the French King's offers. Not content with this the men of Schwytz and Fribourg made the arrest of three of their couriers at Lugano the pretext for a fresh invasion of Lombardy in November, 1511. Other Cantons joined the expedition, and in December an imposing army arrived within sight of Milan. A letter was despatched to the citizens, which spoke of the friendship between Swiss and Lombards under the Sforza regime, and which bade them in the name of liberty rise against the foreign oppressor. For some days the Swiss waited, hoping that Milan would make some response to their advances. Yet none came, and with the city and Castello fortified against their approach, they dared not venture upon an attack. Hence the mercenaries expressed their willingness to be bought off. After prolonged haggling as to terms the Swiss returned home, having failed for a second time to oust the French from Milan. The career of Louis XII. in Italy was, however, drawing to a close. In the autumn of 1511 he sought to avenge himself on Julius II. by means of a General Council summoned to Pisa.

The Council had hardly met before the Florentines besought that it might be removed to some other place. Its withdrawal to Milan was equivalent to its failure. When no Italian State would allow the Council to be held within its territories, the deposition of Julius II. and the election of an anti-Pope by a few Cardinals of the French party was a matter of purely academic interest. Meanwhile the League of Cambrai was transformed into the Holy League. In the early months of 1512 Louis XII. must needs defend his Italian possessions against the joint attack of the Pope, the King of Aragon and the Venetians. All the hopes of the French were centred in the genius of their young Lieutenant-General, Gaston de Foix. Hence his death at Ravenna robbed a most brilliant victory of half its value to the cause of France. If De Foix had lived he would probably have pressed on to Rome, where Julius II. awaited in terror the approach of the victorious army. But paralysed by the loss of their leader and short of supplies, the French tarried until the opportunity had passed. At the end of May they were forced to rally all their strength in order to defend Milan against some 20,000 Swiss who had entered Lombardy as the allies of the Holy League.

The army which now threatened the Duchy of Milan was the strongest that had been raised by the Swiss since the days of their struggle with Charles the Bold. It was composed partly of mercenaries in the service of the Holy League, but at least two-thirds of the force consisted of volunteers who fought in the interests of the Swiss alone. Foremost in all preparations stood the Archbishop of Sion, who had been made Cardinal and Papal Legate of Lombardy by Julius II., in order that he might wage war on the French. "We know the Swiss malady; it is promptly cured with money,"¹ was Schinner's constant advice to the Holy League. Thanks to his efforts no expense was spared in preserving the loyalty of his greedy countrymen. The Emperor Maximilian, although he declined to join the Holy League, agreed to a year's truce with Venice. He withdrew the German troops which had fought in Lombardy in alliance with France, and he further aided the expedition

¹ Kohler, *op. cit.*

by granting the Swiss a free passage through his dominions. Above all, the invading army profited by the fact that they had definitely embraced the cause of the Sforza. Schinner proclaimed openly that he had come to place young Massimiliano upon his father's throne, while the presence of two illegitimate sons of Galeazzo Maria in the Swiss ranks vouched for the sincerity of his promises. Hence the inhabitants of the Duchy forgot their former fears and showed their sympathy with the invaders by every means in their power. In Milan "every one rejoiced, hoping to be free from tyrants and to have an Italian lord".¹ The affairs of the French, on the other hand, went from bad to worse. La Palice, who became the chief of the army on De Foix's death, but who lacked his authority as Lieutenant-General, was forced to waste precious time over a futile expedition to Romagna, with a view to frightening the Pope into good behaviour. Louis XII's ill-advised parsimony considerably reduced the forces available for the defence of Milan. Worse still, La Palice expected the Swiss to invade the Milanese from the north, whereas, thanks to Maximilian, they were able to descend by the Brenner and so to enter the Duchy from the east. La Palice only found out his mistake when the Swiss were in possession of Verona and had joined forces with the Venetians. His attempt at the eleventh hour to hold the line of the Mincio proved a forlorn hope. Swiss and Venetians pressed on, not only across the Mincio but across the Oglio and the Adda, driving the French forces before them. The news that Milan was on the point of rebellion forced La Palice to retire to Pavia, but even here he dared not tarry. On the refusal of the Swiss to negotiate he resolved to evacuate the city. In less than a week the French army was flying in two scattered remnants across the Alps.

Meanwhile Cremona opened her gates to Schinner, who took possession of the city in the name of the Holy League leaving it under the charge of Alessandro Sforza. The loyal Sforzeschi of Pavia promptly informed the allied forces of the departure of the French. In their joy at receiving their old Governor, Giovanni Sforza, Bishop of Genoa, they hailed the

¹ Paullo, A. da, *Cronaca Milanese*.

Swiss as deliverers, and provided them with a month's wages. While the Swiss were still at Pavia, Schinner received a deputation of twelve citizens from Milan, who came to offer themselves to the League and to ask for the restoration of Il Moro's son. In answer to their request, the Archbishop was graciously pleased to accept their oath of fealty in the name of Massimiliano Sforza. When at the end of July Ottaviano Sforza, Bishop of Lodi, entered Milan as Regent, he was welcomed with the utmost enthusiasm. This was the first manifestation of the downfall of the French and of the return of the old regime. Hence the bells rang out, while shouts of "*Liga*" and "Sforza" resounded through the streets. On all sides the cause of the League triumphed. Como swore fealty to the Sforza Duke and massacred the more ardent partisans of France. Genoa set up a Fregoso Doge under the auspices of Venice. Julius II. obtained possession of Parma, Piacenza and the greater part of Romagna. Thus by the end of August the Castello of Milan, the Castelletto of Genoa, and a few other fortresses were the sole remains of Louis XII.'s once vast possessions in Italy.

Massimiliano Sforza, whom the inhabitants of the Milanese hailed on all sides as their Duke, was at this time a youth of nineteen. So long as Bianca Maria Sforza lived he and his brother Francesco had found a home at Innsbruck. Her death in 1510 deprived the two young Sforza of the sole relative who was in a position to shelter them. The Emperor thereupon transferred them to the care of his daughter, Margaret of Austria, and Massimiliano's abode for the last two years had been the Court of the Netherlands, where Margaret acted as Regent for her nephew, Charles. A youth spent in exile had not been beneficial in its effect upon Massimiliano's character. Intellectually the promises of infancy had not been fulfilled. The son of Il Moro and of Beatrice, who at the age of five had recited *Æsop's Fables* "with such pleasure and eloquence as cannot be described," could now barely write a letter. "I have written this with my own hand, because I cannot trust any one else. Your Highness must pardon me if it is badly written, for they did not teach me better at school."¹ This extract from

¹ Beltrami, L., *Castello di Milano*, p. 548.



Anderson

MASSIMILIANO SFORZA

FRESCO ASCRIBED TO LUINI

Castello Sforzesco, Milan

a letter to his brother Francesco is typical of Massimiliano's general attitude towards life. Far from strengthening a feeble nature, adversity seemed to have supplied Massimiliano with an excuse for weakness, of which he constantly availed himself. His "feeble forces," his want of means, his unhappy circumstances, formed his constant theme, and they appeared in his eyes quite sufficient to account for the somewhat ignoble part which he played in the affairs of Milan. With a weak disposition went a certain restless energy which contemporaries held to be inherited from his mother. "The Duke is never still, he does not sleep at night, he is always in motion even when he is doing nothing," wrote Mario Equicola when he was in Milan with Isabella Gonzaga.¹ As a result of this mercurial temperament, Massimiliano possessed the power of rising to the occasion in the face of danger. Yet for the most part he was content to be the sport of circumstances, to cling to those who showed him kindness, to spend money when he had it, and to beg for it when he had none. To make himself, in short, as comfortable as might be amid the uncertain conditions in which an unkind fate had placed him. Such was the youth who was now called upon to ascend the throne of Milan under circumstances before which many a stronger character than Massimiliano Sforza might be expected to succumb.

In his anxiety to wrest Milan from the entire control of the Swiss, the Emperor had at first put forward his grandson, Charles of Austria, as a candidate for the Duchy. The Italian States, however, preferred a weak native dynasty to a Duke who would strengthen the position of the Emperor in Lombardy, while it soon became clear that the Milanese themselves would accept none other than a Sforza lord. An embassy from Milan to Innsbruck in August, 1512, revealed to the Emperor the extraordinary impatience with which Massimiliano's advent was expected. The ambassadors were instructed to inform Sforza that, "if it were possible, Milan and the subject-cities would rise from their deepest foundations to go to meet him". The inhabitants would "bear his person on their shoulders from Germany to his most happy realm". The desire which

¹ Santoro, D., *Vita di Mario Equicola*, Chieti, 1906, p. 273.

every one had to see him made an hour seem like a thousand years.¹ In the face of such enthusiasm the Emperor must needs allow his young kinsman to set out for Italy. At the end of October Massimiliano at length crossed the Brenner to make his way to Mantua where he was eagerly welcomed by his aunt, Isabella Gonzaga. Isabella had exerted herself to smooth the way for her nephew's coming, and she was now prepared to throw herself whole-heartedly into his cause. It was something of a disappointment to her to find that Massimiliano had become "entirely German in his food and in his clothes".² Moreover, the chief effect of his upbringing had been to inspire him with the greatest respect for the Empire, which now showed itself in his refusal to enter Milan except under imperial auspices. Matthias Lang, Bishop of Gurk, who represented the Emperor in Italy, was in Rome. Hence, in spite of the efforts of the Swiss to set Massimiliano on his throne unaided, the ceremony of entry was postponed until Lang's return. Not until 29th December did the new Duke ride to the Porta Ticinese escorted by the Bishop of Gurk and by Raymond de Cardona, Viceroy of Naples. Here Massimiliano was welcomed by Schinner and a company of Swiss, with the result that quarrels began between the Viceroy and the two prelates before the Duke so much as entered Milan. Massimiliano had to don the ducal mantle in the ancient church of S. Eustorgio, outside the gate. The difficulty as to who should invest him with it was only terminated by Sforza himself throwing the cloak over his shoulders. This accomplished, a fresh contest arose over the presentation of the keys of Milan. Here, in spite of Massimiliano's decision for the imperial representative, the Swiss gained the day by threatening to withdraw their protection if this symbol of their power were denied to them. Massimiliano received the keys from Schinner's hands with an expression of gratitude for all that the Swiss had done for him. Then, at last, he was free to enter his capital. The way to the Duomo was made gay with triumphal arches, while at the Court of Arengo a youth

¹ Kohler, *op. cit.*

² Luzio, A., *Isabella d'Este e la Corte Sforzesca*. Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1901.

dressed as Fortune announced that he would atone for his long desertion of the House of Sforza by smiling upon the reign of Massimiliano. Unfortunately the effect of his prophecy was marred by torrents of rain which fell throughout the day, and by the ominous firing of the French garrison who still held the Castello.

Thus, under the auspices of the Holy League, Massimiliano Sforza mounted the throne of his ancestors. The Holy League, however, was composed of various elements, each of which endeavoured to sway the destinies of Milan in a different direction. If Massimiliano had been a strong man he might perhaps have used the opportunity to play off the several members of the League against each other. Being what he was, his accession left the question as to who should be the true ruler of Milan still unsolved. In less than a month after the expulsion of the French, quarrels arose between the two Powers, before which La Palice had fled. The Swiss, with their usual greed for money, sought to wring from Venice all the subsidies which had been promised to them by the Holy League, while Venice, who had already paid more than her share, declined to make further sacrifices. Relations between them became still more strained over the affair of some Florentine soldiers who were plundered by the Venetians, regardless of the safe-conduct which they had obtained from Schinner. Behind these petty quarrels lay a serious difficulty as to the possession of Cremona and the Ghiarad'adda. While Venice clung to her old dream of a frontier that extended to the Adda, Schinner would not allow this dream to be realised at the cost of the integrity of the Duchy. Hence, by the end of July the Venetian forces separated from the Swiss and departed to vent their wrath upon the French garrisons in Brescia and Bergamo. Meanwhile the possession of Parma and Piacenza was the cause of friction between the Pope and Milan. In January, 1513, Massimiliano acted upon the invitation of certain nobles to occupy the two cities. Yet the Pope refused to confirm him in possession of them, while he spent all his energies in the attempt to draw the Emperor into the Holy League. Maximilian refused to come in until Venice

had recognised his rights over Verona and Vicenza and the negotiations seemed likely to drag on interminably. Hence the Duke of Milan complained bitterly of the want of consideration which the Pope showed in "postponing our affairs until a settlement can be made with regard to the affairs of His Imperial Majesty and the Venetians". He also blamed the Pope for the want of respect which his envoys showed towards the Swiss, while he even accused him of leanings towards France.¹ In the midst of these discussions Julius II. died (20th February, 1513). The end came before the fate of Parma and Piacenza had been settled, yet not before the Pope had resolved to sacrifice Venice to the Emperor by proclaiming Verona and Vicenza to be the property of Maximilian. With her claims to Cremona denied and her possession of Verona and Vicenza threatened, Venice had nothing to gain by further adherence to the Holy League. Once more she turned to Louis XII., with whom negotiations were opened by Bartolommeo d'Alviano and Andrea Gritti, both of whom had been sent to France as prisoners during the war. In March, 1513, the transition was made. Maximilian entered the Holy League while Louis XII. prepared for a fresh invasion of Italy, knowing that he could again reckon upon the support of the Venetian Republic.

The news of the French invasion could not but cause grave alarm to the friends of Massimiliano Sforza. In the face of this danger the weakness of the Holy League was revealed to the full. The Emperor was as usual trying to pose as the arbiter of Italy without an armed force at his back, and thus effective aid was not to be looked for from that quarter. The new Pope, Leo X., followed the policy of his predecessor so far as to provide some 40,000 crowns for the campaign against France, but he was not prepared to take an active part in the struggle. Even Cardona turned a deaf ear to Massimiliano's appeals for aid, and refused to allow his troops to cross the Po. The reason for this lukewarmness in Sforza's cause lay in the negotiations between Louis XII. and the

¹ Archivio di Stato di Milano, *Dominio Sforzesco, Signoria Duca Massimiliano*, Letter of 13th February, 1513.

Swiss Government which continued throughout the spring of 1513. All parties expected that the Swiss would at the last moment come to terms with France. Thus the members of the League stood discreetly aloof, leaving Massimiliano at the mercy of his Swiss allies, who seemed more likely than not to turn against him. Within the Duchy the situation appeared no less desperate. "We cannot convey to Your Excellency a hundredth part of the extreme necessity, despair and misery of this district,"¹ wrote a captain from Caravaggio. From all sides came the same tale of scarcity of provisions, of general unrest and of profound discontent at the quartering of troops upon the inhabitants. On the western borders of the Duchy disaffection was rife. Some Milanese troops in the Lomellina, having arrested a man with a load of stolen grain, were sprung upon by a crowd of armed natives crying "France, France". The soldiers escaped with difficulty into a neighbouring fortress where they were besieged for eight hours by the insurgents, until the Milanese, fearing that the mob would force an entrance, yielded up their prisoner.² Meanwhile a certain Sacromoro Visconti skirmished and plundered round Alessandria in defiance of ducal pronouncements against him until he declared himself the champion of France by riding with his men to Asti. Under such circumstances the success of the French seemed assured. So certain were they of victory that Trivulzio sent an advance guard to Milan, which entered the city without any resistance from the inhabitants.

In the hour of danger Massimiliano Sforza appeared at his best. Hearing that the French under Trivulzio and La Trémouille were moving upon Alessandria, he collected the few forces at his disposal in order to give them battle. Schinner, however, bade him wait for the arrival of the new army which was on its way from Switzerland. The Duke thereupon shut himself up in the Castello of Novara from whence the rumour spread that he was a prisoner in the hands of the Swiss. Far from this, his presence served to encourage the garrison, so that they contrived to repulse the French attack upon Novara and

¹ Archivio di Stato di Milano, *loc. cit.* Letter of 7th January, 1513.

² *Loc. cit.* Letter of 28th April, 1513.

to drive the enemy back upon the neighbouring village of Ariotta. Here, on 6th June, 10,000 Swiss descended upon the French camp to crush their enemies at one blow. The battle, according to Massimiliano's own account, "was with such loss and discomfiture to the enemy that nearly 12,000 were killed. The rest were put to flight, the Swiss captains pursuing them together with us, leaving behind them all the artillery and provisions with infinite spoils."¹ Thus, on the same spot and against the same generals did the Swiss redeem the honour which they had lost thirteen years before. When the nation that betrayed Lodovico Sforza for French gold vindicated the cause of his son in order that the Swiss themselves might control the destinies of Milan, the triumph of the progressive party among the Cantons was complete.

With their victory at Ariotta the military prestige of the Swiss reached its highest point. Ever since 1494 the forces of France had seemed well-nigh invincible in Italy, and the fact that they had at last met their match was in itself enough to place their conquerors upon the pinnacle of glory. Massimiliano Sforza could not say enough to express his gratitude for the devotion with which the Swiss had upheld his cause. His former allegiance to the Emperor gave way before his entire confidence in the nation which had saved him from being sent once more upon his travels. From henceforth Schinner was the Duke's "adopted father," and the "*Signori Helveti*" his greatest benefactors. Meanwhile Venice, as the ally of France, had sent Bartolommeo d'Alviano to attack Milan from the east. The Venetians had already captured Cremona when the news of Ariotta stirred the other members of the League into action. In conjunction with some papal forces under Prospero Colonna, Cardona gradually drove Bartolommeo back until in October the campaign ended with the complete defeat of the Venetians at Vicenza. Not only in Italy but throughout Europe the Swiss figured as the arch-enemies of their former patron. In the first flush of victory they took advantage of Louis XII.'s war with Henry VIII. and Maxi-

¹ Avv. Ant. Rusconi, *Massimiliano Sforza e la battaglia dell' Ariotta*, Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1885.

milian to invade Burgundy and to lay siege to Dijon. La Trémouille, rather than face a possible conjunction of the Swiss with the English, agreed to buy their withdrawal with a treaty which pledged Louis XII. to renounce his rights upon Milan and to pay a heavy indemnity to the Cantons. Louis XII. expressed himself much displeased with his general's action and refused to ratify the treaty. Nevertheless, the Dijon episode scored an additional point for the Swiss, thus rendering them confident of their power to defend Milan against all-comers. Throughout these vicissitudes the French garrison still held the Castello of Milan. When in August the city bells were rung in honour of Louis XII.'s defeat by the English at Guinegate the French fired at the Campanile of the Duomo until they broke the bell. At length, on 20th October, a treaty was made by which the garrison agreed to surrender the Castello within thirty days if no help came from France in the meantime. Louis XII. was not in a position to think of Milan, and in November Massimiliano Sforza was able to enter the fortress in which he had first seen light. "Thus," says Prato, "our Duke, who at first merely sat upon the horse, now held the bridle. But the control of the spurs remained with the Swiss, who urged on or held back the horse at their pleasure."¹

Before Massimiliano crossed the Alps he concluded a treaty with the Cantons which determined the relations between the Swiss and Milan throughout his reign. This treaty consulted the interests of the Swiss both as mercenaries and as traders. The Cantons undertook to provide for the defence of Milan in return for an annual pension, in addition to the payment which the troops would receive while on active service. At the same time Domodossola, Lugano and Locarno were added to the territories of the Confederation, and Swiss merchants were freed from tolls up to the gates of Milan. Few treaties, it has been said, offered greater possibilities for the economic and political development of Switzerland.² Nevertheless, Milan had made great pecuniary sacrifices during the war, and to reap the full benefit of this commercial intercourse

¹ *Cronaca Milanese*, Arch. Stor. Ital., vol. iii.

² Kohler, *op. cit.*

the Swiss must forego their immediate claims for money in order that the Duchy might have time to recover its prosperity. Unfortunately the Swiss were not far-sighted enough to realise this necessity. "*Point d'argent point de Suisses*," Bayard had written, and his estimate was only too correct. Schinner, indeed, proved his superiority over the mass of his countrymen by advancing large sums out of his own pocket to satisfy their demand for money. Yet the majority were animated with the sole desire to wring the utmost from the over-burdened inhabitants, who discovered to their despair that they had rid themselves of a single tyrant to fall into the hands of many.

Far from lessening the financial embarrassments of the Duchy, Massimiliano added to them by his personal extravagance. Childish memories of his father's Court had doubtless made the Duke look upon Milan as the home of splendour, and now that he was in possession of his inheritance, he resolved to enjoy himself at all costs. The picture which Mario Equicola¹ gives of the Court of Milan during the summer of 1514, ill befits the gravity of the political situation. Masked balls and banquets formed the daily occupation of the Court. The dresses and the flirtations of the courtiers were primary objects of consideration. Among this frivolous throng the young Duke of Bari was alone distinguished by his serious disposition and by a bearing which was pronounced to be quite ecclesiastical in its gravity. Prato bemoans the time and money which were wasted over frivolities during Isabella Gonzaga's visits to Milan. Even more inexcusable is the item of 30,000 ducats for "the Duke's wardrobe," which appears in the list of State expenses for the year. Massimiliano's lavish gifts to his supporters constituted a further drain upon the resources of Milan. Schinner received Vigevano, while Girolamo Morone, who had played a prominent part in the Sforza restoration, was rewarded with Lecco. Lang and Cardona divided between them the revenues of the Park of Pavia. The gardens of the Castello of Milan were given away even before they fell into the Duke's hands. The loss of income which this excessive generosity entailed must needs be met with fresh

¹ Santoro, *op. cit.*, pp. 257-73.

taxes. After the battle of Ariotta the revenues were forestalled for two years in order to satisfy the claims of the Swiss. Forced loans were exacted upon a large scale, while a new duty was imposed upon every mill-wheel and upon every rod of land that benefited by the waterways of the Duchy. Still more burdensome was the increased salt tax for which Massimiliano obtained special leave from the Pope, in order that he might not bear the sole blame for an unpopular measure. Responsibility could not be thus easily shifted. Complaints against the Swiss and against Massimiliano were heard daily, and the reign of Louis XII. came to be regarded as a time of comparative comfort. Conscious of his growing unpopularity, the Duke began to grow suspicious of every one who seemed more capable or more beloved than himself. Despite Morone's activity in the Sforza cause, there had never been perfect harmony between him and Massimiliano. Morone belonged to a distinguished Milanese family, his grandfather, Bartolomeo, having been one of the original Captains and Defenders of the Ambrosian Republic. In 1499 Girolamo had been singled out by Louis XII. for the post of Fiscal Advocate. With frank opportunism he acknowledged that he took office under the French in order to be "useful to many and harmful to none,"¹ and from the moment of Ottaviano Sforza's entry as Regent he had proved where his true sympathies lay. Yet it seemed that Massimiliano could not forget the years which Morone had spent in the service of France. Morone was excluded from the number of the new Ducal Councillors, and while his talents as a diplomatist were too valuable not to be used, the Duke issued secret instructions that he was to be regarded "with diffidence."² This want of confidence was naturally resented. Although no open rupture occurred, the dislike and mistrust with which Morone and his master regarded one another increased throughout the reign. Another prominent supporter to arouse the Duke's suspicions was Ottaviano Sforza, Bishop of Lodi, who was arrested on a charge of treachery in the summer of 1515, and ultimately banished. Ottaviano's in-

¹ Letter of November, 1499.

² Gioda, C., *Girolamo, Morone e i suoi tempi*. Torino, 1887.

nocence is by no means clear, yet it seems likely that his chief fault, in Massimiliano's eyes, lay in the popularity which he had won by his wise rule in Milan before the arrival of the Duke. Even his own brother excited Massimiliano's jealousy. It was soon realised in Milan that Francesco was by far the better man of the two, whereupon the Duke became possessed with the idea that Francesco wished to supplant him, and he took pains to employ him as much as possible away from the capital. Yet no attempt to suppress possible rivals could stem the tide that was gradually changing the love of Massimiliano's subjects into hatred. As early as July, 1514, contemporary opinion pronounced that if the smallest French force had appeared before Milan, all the city would have turned.

In January, 1515, Francis I. succeeded Louis XII. upon the throne of France. He, no less than his predecessor, was a direct descendant of Valentina Visconti, and he at once prepared to invade Italy in order to enforce his claims to the Duchy of Milan. Thereupon the miserable inhabitants were called upon to furnish 300,000 ducats in order that a fresh army might be collected for Massimiliano's defence. Exhausted by their previous sacrifices, the parochial organisations of Milan declared that payment was impossible. The city was soon in an uproar, shops were closed, and the Swiss were forced to seek refuge in the Castello. When a deputation to the Duke was imprisoned without audience, the citizens raised the banner of S. Ambrose and fortified the Court of Arengo as a centre of resistance. Under such conditions there was nothing for it but to yield. Massimiliano announced that the tax was withdrawn, while he consented to the election of twenty-four citizens to provide for the welfare of the Duchy. With their help a compromise was made, by which the citizens agreed to furnish a considerable sum of money in return for privileges which they had long claimed in vain. In the first place the city obtained the right of electing the Vicar and Twelve of Provision, and all other municipal officers. One hundred and fifty deputies, appointed by the six gates, were to elect these officials, and the Vicar was always to be taken from the College of Jurisprudence. Thus the head of the municipality would hence-

forth be both a native of Milan and a lawyer of some distinction, while the Duke would be no longer able to give or sell public offices at his own discretion. For these privileges alone the citizens offered 50,000 ducats. At the same time the city bought the chief canals of the Duchy with the revenues pertaining to them, and with the obligation of keeping them navigable. Thirdly, Milan was promised an annual revenue from the grist and customs duties, with which to provide for the needs of the city. These three main concessions carried with them the reform of several smaller abuses. Thus, the pernicious practice of granting blank orders of arrest, known as *lettere di giustizia*, to all public officers, was abolished. So, too, the right of weighing bread was restricted to the Vicar of Provision, while the fines imposed upon those convicted of fraud were given to the municipality. As a loaf in Milan stayed at the same price but varied in weight according to the cost of wheat, false measures abounded, and this new decree prevented considerable sums from going into the pockets of some ducal favourite, who might be appointed to the office of weighing. Finally, in order to prevent these newly bestowed powers from being used by the citizens against the despotism, the Duke was allowed to appoint a lieutenant to act as his representative in all municipal proceedings. All these measures of reform were embodied in a ducal decree dated 11th July, 1515.¹ They are chiefly remarkable as showing the tenacity with which Milan clung to her old liberties, and the extent of the resources which enabled her to purchase them as privileges at such a time. Unfortunately, Massimiliano did not remain long enough on the throne for his reforms to bear fruit. In the changes which were to follow, the privileges of Milan were either entirely forfeited or so altered as to lose the greater part of their value. Nevertheless, such remnants of liberty as were afterwards embodied in the Constitutions of Charles V. sprang from the reforms instituted by Massimiliano Sforza in his last desperate attempt to preserve his hold upon Milan.

In France military preparations went on apace until by the

¹ Cf. Verga, E., *Delle Concessioni fatte da Massimiliano Sforza alla Città di Milano*. Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1894.

beginning of August a brilliant army was ready to cross the Alps. At its head came the young monarch, then at the age of twenty, eager to avenge the honour of France by a glorious campaign in Italy. He was accompanied by almost all the French captains of note, by the very flower of his forces. Among the number were Trivulzio, La Palice, Lautrec—all three experienced in Italian warfare—the Constable Bourbon, the Chevalier Bayard and Pedro Navarra, the Spanish general of artillery, who, since his capture at the battle of Ravenna, had transferred his services to the French King. Against this formidable array Massimiliano's chances of success were small. All the difficulties and weaknesses which hampered his cause in 1513 were present in an intensified form. The gravity of the situation may be gauged by the attitude of Isabella Gonzaga, who had taken upon herself the task of finding a bride for her nephew. The Duke's cousin, Bona Sforza, and his former patroness, Margaret of Austria, were among the proposals, and now negotiations were in train for an alliance between Massimiliano and Giovanna, the widow of King Ferrantino of Naples. Yet Isabella realised that a wife would be no advantage to her nephew if he no longer possessed a State. In June she wrote to Giovanna's mother, begging her to consider her daughter's position "should it fare ill with the Duke of Milan," and advising her to wait for a few months until the effect of the French invasion could be seen.¹ Massimiliano had, indeed, the nominal support of the Holy League, which was revived by Leo X. in July. Yet the Pope seized the opportunity to obtain from the Duke of Milan a final surrender of his rights over Parma and Piacenza, and the papal forces confined their activity to the defence of these towns. Cardona planted the Spanish troops near Verona in order to keep the Venetians at bay. Thus it fell once more to the Swiss to take the offensive in conjunction with a small Milanese force under Prospero Colonna. On the eve of the struggle Francis I. was lucky enough to obtain possession of Genoa. In the old days the Sforza Government in Genoa had

¹ Luzio, A., *Isabella d'Este ne' primordi del papato di Leone X.* Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1906,

rested mainly upon the Adorni, and Massimiliano now made a rash attempt to restore them to power, with the result that the Doge, Ottaviano Fregoso, offered the city to France. Hence the Swiss began operations by an attack on Genoa, in the hope that they might deprive the enemy of this valuable basis. On the news that the French were approaching, the Swiss allowed themselves to be bought off by Genoa, from whence they hurried to Susa in order to attack the French army as it descended from the Alps.

Francis I. was expected to enter Piedmont either by the Mont Cenis or by the Mont Genèvre, both well-known passes, and both of which could be guarded from Susa. Thus, when the French came, under Trivulzio's guidance by the unfrequented Col d'Argentière, the Swiss were taken completely by surprise. Before they had recovered themselves, the French had routed the Milanese forces at Villafranca and were pressing on towards the capital. The position of the Swiss at Susa was thus turned. All they could do was to retire upon Milan, in the hope that they might face the French on the Lombard plain, in conjunction with their Papal and Spanish allies. These, however, were not forthcoming. "It is the custom of present-day Popes," wrote Prato, "always to be on the winning side." Leo X., suspecting that Francis I. might prove victorious, ordered his troops to remain at Piacenza, while Cardona withdrew from Verona, leaving the Venetians free to join their allies. Meanwhile the French were making every effort to bribe the Swiss into neutrality. A Council of War was held in Milan, which went so far as to discuss terms of peace, but, thanks to Schinner, it was decided to march out and attack the enemy in the open field. For some days the French had been encamped at Marignano, a few miles south of Milan. Here, two hours before sunset on 14th September, the great conflict began. The Swiss trusted to the weight of their infantry to break through the French ranks, as they had done at Novara. The charge was made, but the French were better prepared for the onslaught, and a desperate fight ensued at close quarters in the gathering darkness. At length, overcome by weariness, the two armies lay down to sleep side by side, only to renew the

struggle with the first break of dawn. It was a battle not of men but of giants, Trivulzio declared, compared with which his eighteen previous conflicts were but child's play. The French were beginning to yield when the arrival of the Venetians, under Alviano, turned the tide in their favour. At the same time Trivulzio threw the Swiss ranks into confusion by flooding the meadows in which they fought. Victory lay with the monarchy and the prestige of the republican army was shattered at one blow. Heavy losses were incurred on both sides. There was scarcely a noble family in France that did not suffer, and the Swiss retired upon Milan leaving some 10,000 of their comrades dead on the field. The worthy shop-keeper, Burigozzo,¹ describes in his chronicle how throughout the day "the poor Swiss" came straggling into Milan, dripping wet up to their waists with the rest of their bodies covered in dust and looking for all the world as if they had been ten years in battle. Thereupon the kindly citizens stood at their doors with food and wine with which "to lighten the hearts of these poor men".

All this time the Duke of Milan was riding high upon the tide of popular favour. Since the disturbances of the summer he had thrown himself unreservedly upon the people, promising that they should keep the keys of the city, and that from henceforth the burdens of State should fall upon the nobility alone. When Trivulzio made an attempt upon Milan a few days before the final conflict, the populace rose in defence of their Duke. Companies were formed in the several gates, to muster daily upon the Piazza of the Castello. People suspected of French leanings were massacred. The bells of the Duomo and the Broletto rang continually. Massimiliano Sforza and liberty were the popular cries of the hour. With the news of Marignano, however, Massimiliano's triumph came to an abrupt end. He withdrew with Morone into the Castello, while Schinner hurried off to Germany, taking with him Francesco Sforza, in order that this last hope of the family should be preserved from the clutches of France. Two days after the battle Pedro Navarra entered to begin the siege of the Castello. Well sup-

¹ *Cronaca Milanese*. Arch. Stor., Ital., vol. iii.

plied with food and ammunition, the fortress could have resisted for several months. Yet Massimiliano had little hope of relief, and he was advised to surrender in order to obtain good terms for himself and his supporters. Eventually Morone and Bourbon drafted a treaty by which Massimiliano renounced all rights to the Duchy and agreed to retire to France, in return for an annual pension of 36,000 crowns. Morone was allowed to retain Lecco, and was promised a seat in the Milanese Senate, while various other Sforzeschi received gifts and pensions. The French King further promised to procure a Cardinal's hat for the ex-Duke. On 6th October the treaty was signed, and before leaving Italy Massimiliano visited Francis I. at Pavia. The description of this interview, given in a letter written from Milan on 12th October, is so characteristic that it is worth quoting in full: "The King, having returned from hunting, was sitting in the room where his supper was spread, when the Duke was brought to him by the Grand Constable. As they entered the room His Majesty lifted his cap from his head, and, rising to his feet, embraced the Duke. In the course of his conversation with the King, the Duke intimated that he had decided to become an ecclesiastic in order to take from His Majesty all suspicion that he should ever think again of the Duchy of Milan. Moreover, he thanked God for having taken him from out of bondage to peasants to make him the subject of so noble a King as His Majesty, whom he only begged to be as scrupulous in the observance of his promises as he himself would be with regard to his oath plighted to the King. His Majesty replied, with other friendly words: 'Sir, you need have no fear that I will fail you. But I am surprised that you have decided to be an ecclesiastic. If you desire it, I will find you a wife and make some honourable and good match for you.' The Duke stayed with the King about half an hour and then took leave. When the King departed, he stayed at Pavia in the Castello for about six days and then set out for France, escorted by a Frenchman called Mortemala"¹ (*sic*).

So ended the public career of Massimiliano Sforza, at which no one rejoiced more heartily than himself. Character and

¹ British Museum, *Harleian MS.* 3462, pp. 193 *seq.*

circumstances had combined to render his position in Milan well-nigh intolerable. A mere dummy in the hands of the Swiss, he nevertheless had to bear the brunt of their unpopularity and to watch his gradual decline in the affections of his subjects. Even during the last burst of enthusiasm in his favour, he must perforce have been wondering how to satisfy the demands of the Swiss should they return victorious from Marignano. When he bade farewell to Italy he congratulated himself that he was at last free "from the domination of the Swiss, the frauds of the Spaniards, and the vexations of the Emperor".¹ Massimiliano's life in France was far more congenial to him than the arduous work of government. It is true that he obtained neither the Cardinal's hat nor the wife that he had been promised. Yet he was free to follow the Court from one pleasant city to another, and his worst trouble was a certain amount of difficulty in getting his pension paid. Milan heard little more of her ex-Duke until, one day in the summer of 1530, the citizens were told to close their shops while Masses were said for the repose of the soul of Massimiliano Sforza, who had died in Paris on 25th May. With the battle of Marignano the Swiss Confederation ceased to act as an independent power in the affairs of Italy. In the spring of 1516 Schinner organised an abortive attack on Milan in conjunction with the Emperor Maximilian. Large numbers of Swiss had, however, been bought by the French King, and Maximilian, fearing that his allies would turn traitors, soon left them without a leader. Thereupon the Cantons came to terms with France in the Eternal Peace of Fribourg. Domodossola became once more Italian, but the Swiss retained Bellinzona, part of Lake Lugano and the Locarno end of Lake Maggiore. Their allies of the Grison League received Chiavenna and the Val Tellina up to Bormio, which they have since lost. But for this exception the Peace of Fribourg fixed the frontiers between Switzerland and the Milanese down to the present day. It also made permanent the system of bribes and pensions which bound the Swiss mercenaries to the service of France. The attempt of the progressive party to throw off the yoke of servitude had failed. During their

¹ Rosmini, vol. iii., p. 408,

career in Milan the Swiss had been found wanting, both in the arts of peace and in the military organisation which had for a time seemed invincible. Henceforth they figure in European history as the loyal servants of the French Crown. Swiss merchants and tradesmen still abound in Milan, but the hope of including the Duchy within the boundaries of Switzerland vanished with the fall of Massimiliano Sforza.

CHAPTER X

FRANCESCO II.—LAST OF THE SFORZA

(1515—1535)

ON 11th October, 1515, Francis I. entered Milan by the Porta Ticinese, clad in a suit of sky-blue velvet embroidered with golden lilies. The usual ceremonies were performed in the Duomo and all possible preparations were made to do honour to the new ruler of Milan. Nevertheless, the citizens must needs have welcomed the French King with heavy hearts. All the sacrifices which they had made to preserve the native dynasty had proved unavailing, and Milan was once more in the position which she had held three years earlier, save for a new tax of some hundred thousand ducats which Francis I. imposed to pay for the expenses of his campaign. Long experience made the citizens place small faith in the promises that there should be no such taxation in the future, and their scepticism was speedily justified. In the following year, forced loans to the extent of 200,000 ducats were raised to pay for the Peace of Fribourg. There seemed no limit to the burdens which Milan might be called upon to bear, and Prato gives expression to the general sense of despair when he exclaims: "Our rulers go from bad to worse, hence we must pray God to give Francis I. a long life".

In spite of the gloomy outlook, the inhabitants of Milan, with characteristic long-suffering and courage, prepared to make the best of the situation. Petitions were at once addressed to Francis I. which aimed at limiting the authority of the Lieutenant-General, at remedying some of the most flagrant abuses in civil and criminal jurisdiction and at preserving the liberties which the city had recently obtained from Massimi-

liano. The French King's answers were only partially favourable to the popular cause. Apparently the full sum had not been paid to the late Duke for his sale of the canals, for the citizens asked that they might be granted to the community without reference to the recent transaction. Their request was refused, and the canals passed once more under royal control. On the occupation of Milan by the French, Bourbon had been appointed Regent, and he had endeavoured to court popularity by granting the taxes on grist and wine to the community. Francis I. refused to recognise Bourbon's power to dispose of the taxes, yet he respected the claims of the city so far as to grant an annual revenue of 10,000 ducats, half of which was to be spent on the formation of a new canal while the remainder could be employed by the Vicar and Twelve, assisted by a special committee, for the general needs of Milan. With regard to the election of the Vicar and Twelve and other municipal officials, Francis I. introduced a considerable modification into the reforms of July, 1515. Whereas it had been intended that a hundred and fifty elected deputies should appoint to the municipal offices, they were now ordered to elect three times the number of candidates required, from which the Duke or his Lieutenant should make the final choice. From this time, moreover, the hundred and fifty deputies came to be regarded as a diminished form of the old Council of Nine Hundred. Massimiliano and his advisers had probably no such idea in their minds, and, indeed, the Council of Nine Hundred had twice been summoned during his reign. Yet the existence of two popularly elected bodies, each with the minimum of power, doubtless produced confusion in the mind of the foreigner. Hence the Hundred and Fifty and not the Nine Hundred were summoned to consult on the concessions of Francis I. A year or two later, the French Lieutenant-General, Lautrec, reduced the number of deputies to sixty. There is even a doubt whether they were elected at all or whether they were simply chosen by the Lieutenant. It is certain that during Lautrec's despotic rule, the Vicar and Twelve no longer held office for a year at a time, but at the will of the Lieutenant-General. This matter of the municipal offices was not finally settled until 1537, when

Charles V. decreed that the Sixty should present the names of six doctors of the College of Jurisprudence, from whom the Duke should appoint his Lieutenant in the Tribunal of Provision. Then the Ducal Lieutenant should become the Vicar of Provision for the following year without further election. Two of the Twelve were to be drawn from the College of Jurisprudence while the Duke chose the remaining ten from eighteen nobles elected by the Sixty. To this small permanent remnant were reduced reforms which had aimed at freeing municipal officers from the control of the despot.¹

Meanwhile, from 1517, Milan was groaning under the harsh rule of Lautrec. A system which drove the richest and most influential citizens into exile, and which kept Milan in a ferment of discontent was probably far from the intentions of Francis I. Yet it was impossible for the French King to rule Milan personally, and he was thus obliged to stand or fall by the actions of his Lieutenant-General. For a short time the Milanese gained an unexpected champion in the person of their old oppressor, Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, who ventured to oppose some arbitrary taxation instituted by Lautrec. Trivulzio, grown mild in his old age, and living in great magnificence in Milan, had won considerable popularity with his fellow-citizens. Hence Lautrec came to look upon him as a dangerous rival of whom it would be well to be rid. An attempt was made to prove that Trivulzio had plotted with the Swiss to procure the independence of Lombardy, with the result that the old man of eighty was summoned to France in the dead of winter in order to answer the charges brought against him. Trivulzio had been but a short time in France when he fell dangerously ill and died in December, 1518. According to one version, it was not so much Lautrec as Galeazzo San Severino who poisoned the French King's mind against him. San Severino had supplanted Trivulzio in the affections of Francis I. as formerly he had ousted him from Il Moro's favour. Now, however, it was too late for Trivulzio to seek a new master. His death in exile and disgrace, if it seemed like a judgment upon one who had brought

¹ Cf. Verga, E., Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1894.

much trouble upon Italy, accorded ill with the services which he had rendered to the French crown.

When Massimiliano Sforza came to terms with the French, room had been left for the inclusion of his brother Francesco in the treaty. He, however, had rejected all advances and had returned to his exile at Trent, until the time should come for him to try once more his fortune in Italy. In 1521 the opportunity arose with the beginning of the life-long rivalry between Charles V. and Francis I. Two years before, Charles V. had succeeded his grandfather Maximilian as Emperor, and Francis I., as the defeated candidate, was ready to wreak vengeance upon his rival. Of far greater importance with regard to Italy was the quarrel with France, which Charles V. inherited from his maternal grandfather, Ferdinand of Spain. Ever since Louis XII. had called in King Ferdinand to aid him in the conquest of Naples, the rulers of France and Spain had vied with each other for the control of the destinies of Italy. It was commonly reported that the French victory of Marignano finally decided Ferdinand not to leave the Spanish kingdom to his younger grandson, but to make Charles his sole heir in order that he might be strengthened for the inevitable conflict with Francis I. Be that as it may, the defeat of the Swiss removed a factor from Italian warfare which had temporarily obscured its real issues. From the day of Marignano Lombardy was marked out as the battlefield between France and Spain, where Charles would endeavour to drive the French from Milan as Ferdinand had formerly driven them from Naples. Into this great European struggle the destinies of the last Sforza were woven. The tenacity with which Milan clung to a native lord made Francesco a valuable instrument in the hands of either party. Thus, profiting sometimes by the one, sometimes by the other, he was able, but for occasional intervals, to maintain himself upon the throne of Milan until his death.

In March, 1521, war began with unofficial raids upon the Netherlands, on the part of the Lord of Bouillon and the Duke of Guelders. That same month an eagle was observed to perch upon the topmost turret of the Castello of Milan, where

it remained for some time, flapping its wings and refusing to be dislodged by the missiles which were aimed at it by the French soldiers. At the end of June, a serious accident occurred in the Castello owing to the explosion of some gunpowder which brought Filarete's tower down in ruins, killing some soldiers in its fall and covering the Piazza d'Armi with débris. The accident was caused by lightning which set fire to some powder left carelessly about. Nevertheless, in the eyes of the Milanese, both this disaster and the episode of the eagle were clear auguries of the approaching defeat of the French at the hands of the Imperialists. Meanwhile Francesco Sforza had visited the Emperor and had gone away happy with Charles V.'s assurance that he would restore him to the Duchy of Milan or lose the Imperial crown in the attempt. After much hesitation, Leo X. had decided that Charles was the least dangerous of the two rivals and the one whom the Papacy had better support. Hence, in May, 1521, Pope and Emperor entered into a league for the restoration of Sforza, with the further agreement that Parma and Piacenza should be reconquered for the Papacy, and that Charles should take the family of Medici under his especial protection. The League found a warm supporter in Girolamo Morone, who had for long been the soul of all intrigues against French rule. When Morone discovered that Francis I. intended to employ him, not in Milan but in France, he promptly placed himself at the disposal of Francesco Sforza. In 1518 he joined the band of exiles at Trent, where he remained until the events of 1521 ended his enforced idleness. With other ardent Sforzeschi, he descended upon Reggio, from whence, he organised two abortive attempts on Milan during the summer of 1521. Lautrec retaliated by an attack on Reggio, and thereupon the League seized the opportunity to declare war. Both sides had previously engaged Swiss mercenaries, but the Cantons, unwilling to be employed against either France or the Empire, ordered their countrymen in both camps to withdraw. Thanks, however, to the exertions of Cardinal Schinner, only those on the side of France obeyed. Lautrec, after a vain attempt to hold the line of the Adda, was forced back upon Milan. Some

ten days later, on 19th November, the papal-imperial army entered the capital in the name of Francesco Sforza. The fall of the French had come about so unexpectedly, that before they could recover from the shock all the chief towns of the Duchy had followed Milan's example. Leo X. rejoiced in the possession of Parma and Piacenza. Morone was made Governor of Milan, pending the arrival of Sforza. Pavia, Lodi, Como, Alessandria surrendered to the League, while the French held only a few fortresses. The Pope did not long enjoy his triumph, and his death, in December, was followed by the election of Charles V.'s tutor, Adrian, who resolved to maintain a strictly neutral attitude with regard to the war. Yet even the defection of the Papacy hardly checked the course of Imperialist success. Early in April, 1522, Francesco Sforza reached Italy to inspire fresh courage and enthusiasm among his subjects. Accompanied by 5,000 German infantry, Francesco crossed the Brenner to Verona, and after a short halt at Mantua he at once proceeded to Pavia. Here he was received with open arms by the Marquis of Mantua, who, with the Spanish general Antonio de Leyva, was in charge of the town. The Milanese, however, declined to furnish money for the Imperial army until they had seen Sforza's face. Hence Prospero Colonna, the Captain-General of the League, came in person to conduct Francesco to his capital, which he entered "to such ringing of bells and firing of artillery as might have brought the world down in ruins".¹ "It is impossible," writes Guicciardini,² "to describe the joy with which Francesco was received by the people of Milan." The memory of their former happiness under the rule of his father and grandfather, and their earnest desire to have a prince of their own, alike moved the citizens in Sforza's favour. Nobles, merchants and populace brought their money and even their jewels and silver to be used in his service. "Thus," says Grumello, "the imperial army was paid and every one was prepared to fight bravely against the French."

Francesco Sforza's adherents had need of all their courage

¹ Grumello, *Cronaca Pavese* (1467-1529).

² *Storia d'Italia*, book 14.

at this juncture, as Lautrec had already arrived in the neighbourhood with a fresh army at his back and was boasting freely that he would soon be in Milan. On this occasion the French had succeeded in capturing the services of the Swiss, who were already clamouring for pay. Hence Lautrec determined to force on a battle before the Swiss mercenaries began to fall away. On 27th April he marched out of Monza in the direction of the capital. At the villa of Bicocca Lautrec's army encountered the Imperialists to receive a crushing defeat at their hands. The victory was largely due to the Spanish infantry, which proved itself superior even to the Swiss, while 6,000 Milanese citizens under Sforza's leadership also did good service. Nothing was now left to the French save the Castles of Milan and Cremona. Lautrec retired discomfited to France while Colonna took advantage of his victory to drive the French from Genoa and to set up an Adorni Doge.

The eighteen months following Bicocca were perhaps the most prosperous in Francesco Sforza's career. During that short interval no foreign army disputed his possession of the Duchy, and he was thus free to devote himself to its internal affairs. In May Francesco issued an edict for the reform of the Senate, which purged it of its foreign element and raised the numbers from fifteen to twenty-seven. Members of the ducal family became Senators of right, and this, with the increase in numbers, modified the Senate in the direction of the two Councils which it had replaced in 1499. Any such change was gratifying to the people, who had come to look upon the last century as a golden age. With a Sforza Duke to be gazed at daily in Milan and with the banners which he had helped to win at Bicocca hanging in the Duomo, it seemed as though at least a reflection of those good old times had returned. Meanwhile Morone exerted himself to render the city militia more efficient. Two nobles were chosen in each gate to keep a list of all capable of bearing arms, and to organise a company, headed by its own captain, in every parish. Morone obtained somewhat unexpected assistance from a popular preacher who was much in vogue in Milan at that time. A few years earlier



Anderson

FRANCESCO SFORZA II

FRESCO ASCRIBED TO LUINI

Castello Sforzesco, Milan

Milan had been stirred by the words of a certain Girolamo da Siena, who had come to the city, wearing the roughest of garments and eating only bread and water, to preach a crusade against luxury. Permission to preach was denied him by the Archbishop on the ground that he belonged to no clerical order. In spite of this he spoke to the people daily on the Piazza of the Duomo "with such eloquence that all Milan flocked to hear him".¹ The idleness and vice of the clergy were the special objects of his denunciation. Hence some of the Friars accused him of being the secret enemy of France and of fostering sedition among the people. He was examined by Trivulzio and succeeded in proving his innocence of all political intrigue. From this time, however, his hearers began to fall away, and soon after Girolamo left Milan. Now, in 1522, when an Augustinian friar, Andrea Barbato, began to exercise the same influence over the people and to promise everlasting bliss to any who should die in the defence of their rightful lord, Morone welcomed the preacher as a weapon in the hands of the existing government. Thanks to Barbato's eloquence, and to Morone's organisation, the city militia was stirred into unwonted activity. The parochial bands materially assisted the regular soldiers in their task of guarding Milan while the people complained of no hardship which would help to maintain Francesco on his throne and to check the expected French invasion.

In April, 1523, the French garrison in the Castello of Milan surrendered after a fourteen months' siege. Charles V., with commendable moderation, at once placed the fortress in Francesco Sforza's possession. His action did much to strengthen the imperial cause in Italy by making Charles appear as the champion of Italian liberty against French domination. As an immediate result of this policy Venice, who had most to gain from a weak ruler in Milan, renounced her French proclivities and joined in a League with Charles and Sforza for the defence of Lombardy. A month or two later, France received another blow owing to the breach between the Constable Bourbon and Francis I. The appearance of the sometime

¹ Prato, *Cronaca Milanese*.

French governor of Milan as Lieutenant-General of the Emperor in Italy heightened Charles's prestige and increased the confidence of imperial protégés such as Sforza. Just at this time, when fortune seemed to smile upon Duke Francesco, he narrowly escaped falling a victim to an assassin's dagger. One day in August Francesco was riding from Monza to Milan alone with Bonifazio Visconti, a member of his household. The guards who escorted them had been ordered to remain at a distance in order that the Duke might be free from the dust which they raised. Suddenly, at a bend in the road, Visconti seized his dagger and aimed a blow at Francesco's head. Owing to a movement on the part of his horse, Visconti missed his aim and the Duke was only slightly wounded in the shoulder. In three days' time Francesco had, to all appearances, recovered, yet it was commonly reported that the dagger was poisoned and that Francesco's ill-health in later years was due to this accident. The motives which prompted this would-be assassin were purely personal. Some coveted preferment had been denied to him and a near relative had lately been executed at Morone's order. In Milan the news was received with the greatest consternation, and the incident only served to increase Francesco's popularity.

Bourbon's defection, although it delayed the French invasion, could not postpone it indefinitely, and in September, 1523, Admiral Bonnivet entered Italy. Milan was subjected to an eight weeks' siege, but, at the end of that time, the intense cold forced the invading army into winter quarters at Abbiategrasso. In the spring of 1524 the Imperialists succeeded in driving Bonnivet across the Sesia, from whence he retired ignominiously over the Alps. Francesco Sforza was apparently in a stronger position than ever. Nevertheless, the final decline of his cause and the ruin of Milan's already waning prosperity dates from this year. Francesco had himself taken part in the conflict which broke up the French camp at Abbiategrasso and had entered the town in triumph at the head of the Milanese contingent. The victory, however, cost him dear. Abbiategrasso was infected with plague and Sforza's troops brought the disease back with them to Milan, where it raged throughout the summer.

Burigozzo puts the number of deaths at 100,000, while Grumello says 80,000 "and more rather than less". Milan became for the time a city of the dead. Her Duke withdrew to the fortress of Trezzo, the churches were empty, bells ceased to ring, and carts carrying the dead to burial were alone to be seen in the streets. When, with the approach of autumn, the plague grew less and the citizens began to resume their normal habits, they were greeted with the news that a French army was about to descend on Italy, led by Francis I. in person. Worn out as they were by all that they had gone through, the surviving inhabitants were prepared to rally in their Duke's defence. Both Francesco and Morone, however, saw that under the present conditions it would be madness to risk a siege. There was nothing for it but to yield to the times. Telling his people not to irritate the enemy, Francesco left Milan for Soncino on 3rd October. Just twenty days later Francis I. took peaceful possession of the city.

During the summer of 1524 the Imperialists had made an unsuccessful attack on Marseilles, from whence they were obliged to hurry back to Italy on the news of the French King's coming. Thus Francis I. had contrived to catch the enemy at a disadvantage. Pescara and Bourbon arrived too late to attempt to hold Milan, and they withdrew to Lodi with the main army, while Leyva prepared to defend Pavia. His troops, who were for the most part German, were already clamouring for pay. Hence when Francis I. laid siege to Pavia he reckoned upon a comparatively easy task. Opinion in Italy was confident of the French King's success, so much so that the Powers began to negotiate with France in order that they might not be wholly committed to the losing side. The new Pope, Clement VII., who as a Medici was expected to adhere to the policy of Leo X., proposed a secret treaty with Francis, by which the Papacy and Florence pledged themselves to neutrality in exchange for French protection. Francis I. accepted gladly and received, in consequence, free passage through papal territory for the troops which he was sending to create a diversion on Naples. At the same time Giovanni dei Medici passed with his "Black Bands" from the service of the League to that of Francis. To the

subjects of Francesco Sforza it was no small consolation that Giovanni lost the salary of "4,000 good ducats," paid to him by their Duke, only to receive a wound in his heel which disabled him for the rest of the campaign.

It was not long before the French discovered that they had reckoned too hastily upon victory. Lautrec's government had earned undying hatred from the people of Pavia, who threw themselves heart and soul into the defence of the town, treating the German soldiers like brothers and aiding them by every means in their power. After various attempts to take Pavia by assault, Francis I. was forced to resign himself to a tedious blockade which dragged on throughout the winter. Pescara, meanwhile, refused to be drawn off to Naples and determined to concentrate all efforts on the relief of Pavia. Yet even his inspiring influence could not keep unpaid and ill-fed troops indefinitely in the field. It was decided at length to force on a battle by attacking the French camp in the Park of Mirabello. On 24th February, Charles V.'s birthday, the famous conflict took place. That same evening Morone sent the following letter to his wife at Crema:—

"BELOVED CONSORT,—God of His great goodness has given us victory. The French are beaten and shattered. Thank God. Be of good cheer. No more."¹

It might well seem to the victorious Imperialists that Divine intervention alone could account for their triumph. Practically all the French generals of note were either killed or taken prisoner. Among those who perished were La Trémouille, La Palice and Bonnavet, all of whom had at one time or another played a prominent part in the fortunes of Milan. Here, too, Il Moro's old friend, Galeazzo San Severino, met his death. Gallant to the last, he refused the proffered assistance of one who saw him fall, saying: "I have no more need of help, look to the King and leave me to die". Francis I. was taken prisoner by Lannoy, the Viceroy of Naples, who lodged him in the monastery of San Paolo, from whence he was removed in three days' time to the fortress of Pizzighettone, to await the imperial instruc-

¹ Gioda, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

tions. Meanwhile the shattered remnant of the French army hurried out of Italy, leaving Charles absolute master of the situation.

From the point of view of Francesco Sforza, the victory of Pavia was only too complete. Although he was able to return in peace to Milan, the high price which Charles required for the investiture and the presence of the imperial forces in the city rendered Sforza Duke only in name. Francesco complained bitterly of his hard fate. It was difficult, he declared, to know which was greater, his happiness on recovering the Duchy of Milan or his misery since he had obtained possession of it. To Girolamo Morone the situation was intolerable. His years of exile and of intrigue against the French government; his efforts, since 1521, to restore some measure of prosperity and self-confidence to his unhappy countrymen; the devotion which he had shown during the awful weeks of plague, when the citizens turned to him as their only hope; all had been directed towards the one end of establishing the independence of Milan. Now, when success seemed assured, he saw the edifice upon which all his labours had been expended crumble beneath the heavy hand of the Emperor. Rather than submit, he resolved to take advantage of the general unsettlement to free Italy from imperial control, before Charles and Francis had come to terms. Morone found a sympathetic ally in Clement VII., who, mindful of his recent intrigues, was thoroughly frightened at Charles V.'s triumph. Together they laid the foundations of a conspiracy which aimed at driving out the foreigner and at restoring the Five States of Italy to the position which they had enjoyed before 1494. The scheme had fair prospect of success. Venice proved no less sympathetic than the Papacy, while Louise of France, anxious to procure her son's release, despatched an ambassador "to work for the freedom of Italy". A weak point lay in Francesco Sforza, who, at that time, was lying dangerously ill in the Castello of Milan. His death was expected hourly, and in that event the Pope and the Venetians proposed to invite Massimiliano to return with a French army at his back. A somewhat heated correspondence passed between Francesco and

Massimiliano on the subject in the following year,¹ when the latter denied any attempt to make himself Duke of Milan. Yet it is clear from his letters that Massimiliano resented his younger brother's position as Duke, and that he would have welcomed an opportunity to regain his former prestige. Whatever was Massimiliano's attitude, Morone would have none of him. It would be better, he declared, for the Duchy to be ruled by Cæsar than by Massimiliano, and he determined that the plot should stand or fall by Francesco. Another difficulty arose over the disposal of the Kingdom of Naples. While Sforza and Medici still remained for Milan and Florence, there was no obvious successor to the illegitimate line of Aragon. The candidate suggested for the vacant throne was no less a person than Charles V.'s general, Pescara. Although of Spanish origin, his family had become Italianised by long sojourn in the Kingdom of Naples, where they had been conspicuous for their loyalty to King Ferrante and his descendants. Moreover, Pescara had grievances of his own against the Emperor. The true hero of Pavia, he had been deprived of the credit due to him by Lannoy, who arrived at the seat of war in time to share in the victory, having escaped the weary months of waiting when Pescara alone prevented the imperial troops from melting away. If Pescara could be drawn into the conspiracy, it would gain the military leader which it urgently needed. Hence it was decided that Morone should approach him on the subject, the Pope agreeing to invest him with Naples as the price of his services. Pescara apparently viewed these proposals with favour. After some hesitation, he professed himself satisfied with the theories elaborated in Rome, which pronounced the violation of his oath to the Emperor to be consistent with his honour, owing to the superior claims of the Pope upon his obedience. In October he summoned Morone to discuss the subject with him in the Castello of Novara. Here Morone laid bare the full extent of the conspiracy, for the benefit of Leyva, whom Pescara had hidden behind the arras. On leaving the fortress Morone was arrested in the name of the Emperor. Various explanations have been given

¹ Cf. Appendix.

of Pescara's conduct, but it seems clear that he was throughout loyal to Charles V. Since July he had kept his imperial master informed of everything that had passed between him and the conspirators, while he had only waited to take action until all the threads of the plot were in his hands. He now pleaded on behalf of the man whom he had betrayed, and, on his death in December, he left a special petition to Charles V. that Morone's life should be spared. Charles was prepared to show mercy towards the chief conspirator if he could thereby render the luckless Sforza the scapegoat. Early in 1526 Morone obtained his pardon, to spend his remaining years in imperial service. Opportunism, which he had followed as a principle, had in truth proved Morone's bane. In spite of his abilities, no government had ever trusted him entirely. In spite of his labours for Milan, he was held to be the best hated man in the city. Now, at the end of his career, he surrendered his dearest aims in order to win an unenviable reputation in the service of the foreign Power that was fast robbing Italy of her independence.

Although it may be assumed that Francesco Sforza knew and approved of the Morone conspiracy, his illness obviously prevented him from playing a prominent part in it. He had not yet left his bed when an envoy came to announce that he was accused of treachery towards the Emperor, and to bid him yield the Castles of Milan and Cremona until he had proved his innocence. This Sforza refused to do and Imperialist troops thereupon laid siege to the Castello of Milan. Beginning in November, a gallant defence was maintained, until the new year brought some prospect of relief. In January, 1526, the Treaty of Madrid was signed, and Francis I. regained his liberty on conditions which he had from the first intended to repudiate. Four months later the Pope absolved Francis from his oath in order that he might join the League of Cognac, which aimed at driving the Imperialists from Italy. Henry VIII. became Protector of the League, the Pope, Venice, Florence and Sforza were among its members, while the relief of Milan formed the first item on its programme. On 7th July, the main army under the Duke of Urbino, was within

five miles of the city, while Giovanni dei Medici actually went so far as to attack the Porta Romana. He was, however, repulsed and the Duke of Urbino, with ill-advised caution, postponed a fresh attempt until the 25th, when he hoped to be reinforced by the Swiss. On 24th July the *raison d'être* of the attack on Milan disappeared with the capitulation of the Castello. For eight months the defence had been conducted with the utmost bravery. The women and children had been got out of the Castello by a stratagem. The besieging army had been harried by sorties, one of which led to the capture of fifty Germans who were exchanged for an equal number of cattle. The populace had aided the beleaguered garrison by every means in their power. Yet Francesco and his companions could not starve indefinitely. As it was, the Duke rode out of the Castello broken in health and looking as though nothing were left of him but skin and bone. According to the terms of the treaty, Sforza was given Como with a revenue of 30,000 ducats, while the garrison and other of Francesco's supporters were protected by an indemnity. Yet the Spanish troops were not withdrawn from Como and Francesco ultimately joined the camp of the allies at Lodi, where he ratified the League of Cognac. Meanwhile the Duke of Urbino's forces were swelled by the arrival of 14,000 Swiss, in the pay of France. Although they were too late to save Milan, they were able to relieve Cremona, where the fortress was still held for Sforza. In September the League occupied the town, which became Francesco's head-quarters for the next few years.

The years 1526-1529 are among the most miserable in Italian history, and no State suffered more cruelly than did the Duchy of Milan. Milan itself underwent no one terrible sack as did Rome, nor any great siege as did Florence. It was rather in a perpetual state of siege, always on the verge of starvation, a prey to the molestations of German and Spanish soldiers, until, at last, the foreign troops which poured through Lombardy passed it by as a place which had been already sucked dry and which it was not worth while to plunder. So long as their Duke held out in the Castello, the citizens made some show of resistance to the imperial army. In April, 1526,

the death of a salt-merchant in the attempt to save his house from plunder, led to a popular rising which the Imperialists were quite unable to quell. Public buildings were sacked and prisons were burst open while Leyva barricaded himself in his lodgings in the Porta Comasina, expecting every moment that the mob would break in upon him. Order was eventually restored by some of the Milanese nobility, notably Pietro Pusterla and Francesco Visconti, who undertook to quiet the people with the promise that there should be no further taxation nor quartering of soldiers upon the inhabitants. Terms thus granted in a moment of panic were not likely to be kept, and, indeed, Leyva had no way of providing for his troops, save at the expense of the Milanese. Hence in June the popular fury broke out anew. Once more the streets were barricaded, many parts of the city were in flames, and over a hundred soldiers fell in the frays which ensued. At length Leyva struck at the root of these disturbances by driving all the most ardent Sforzeschi into exile. Deprived of their leaders, the people were left at the mercy of the imperial troops, and there was no injury or cruelty which they did not suffer at their hands. The cunning of the Spaniards in their search for plunder and the relentless way in which they forced the citizens to supply their wants, rendered the rough German troops mild in comparison. So much so that the German quarter of Milan earned the name of "Cuccagna," or land of plenty, to which the people were wont to fly from the miseries of "Spain". On the return of Bourbon from Madrid, towards the end of 1526, appeals were made to him from the principal citizens to rid them of their oppressors. He replied that want of money was the sole obstacle, and that if Milan could produce a month's wages he would withdraw the army from the city. If he failed to keep his promise, Bourbon added, might he fall in the first encounter with the enemy. At great sacrifice the money was raised, yet it brought no further relief than the withdrawal of a few troops to the suburbs. Hence Bourbon's death in May, 1527, as he scaled the walls of Rome, seemed in the eyes of Milan a judgment upon his want of faith.

So far as any one person was responsible for the troubles of Milan since the battle of Pavia, it was Clement VII. But for him both the Morone Conspiracy and the League of Cognac would have been impossible, and Francesco Sforza, his grievances forgotten, might have been reigning happily over the Duchy under imperial protection. France and England were ready enough to encourage the Italian States in their resistance to the Empire, yet their help had extended little beyond fair words. Charles V., on his side, made repeated efforts to come to terms with the Pope, and even at the end of 1526 he was prepared to make peace upon conditions which would restore Sforza to Milan after a nominal trial. Clement, however, continued to dally with France, while by means of his nuncios he enkindled the war-like ardour of the Italian princes, bidding them use the finest opportunity in the world for winning freedom and glory. Hence there is ironic justice in the idea that Bourbon acted on Morone's advice when he resolved to march on Rome in order that the troops which had exhausted Milan might tap a fresh source of supplies in the papal city. In January, 1527, Bourbon started on his journey southward, joining Frundesberg and his Germans at Piacenza and leaving Leyva with a comparatively small force for the defence of Lombardy. The weakening of the Imperialists in Lombardy gave fresh zest to the actions of the League. Francesco Sforza and the Venetians prepared to attack the Milanese, while Francis I. at length exerted himself to send a French army under Lautrec across the Alps. Throughout the year 1527 the cause of the League triumphed. Alessandria, Vigevano, Pavia were occupied by Lautrec, while the influence of Andrea Doria transferred Genoa to the side of France. Leyva could only cling to Milan, where the citizens lived in daily expectation of a French sack. So constant were the raids upon their goods and money, says Burigozzo, that as far as loss of property was concerned, the prospect of a sack presented no fresh terrors to the inhabitants. These temporary successes, however, did little to further the interests of Sforza. They only involved fresh miseries for the conquered towns and fresh efforts on Leyva's part to raise food and money for his troops. Early

in 1528 Lautrec set out for Naples, and his conquests melted away as rapidly as they had been made.

For a year and a half more the weary warfare dragged on. The Duke of Brunswick entered Italy with a contingent of Germans, destined to reinforce the Imperialists in Naples. He remained in Lombardy to drive the garrisons of the League from a few fortresses and to eat up Leyva's scanty supplies, until the low fever which raged in Milan spread to his troops and forced him to retire to Germany. Meanwhile Lautrec died, and in August, 1528, the remnant of the French army in Neapolitan territory was forced to capitulate. Andrea Doria, moreover, went over with his fleet to the side of the Empire, on the condition that Genoa should be recognised as an independent State. Thus the pressure on Naples relaxed both by land and sea and the French expedition, which had seemed likely to drive the Imperialists from Italy, collapsed, beaten and discredited. In the following year Francis I. made one last effort to avenge the honour of his nation by sending Saint Pol to Italy. Leyva, however, contrived to surprise the French at Landriano where, in June, 1529, a battle took place. With Saint Pol's defeat on this occasion ended the last serious attempt on the part of France to regain possession of Milan. After well-nigh eight years of fighting the struggle for the Duchy was decided in Charles V.'s favour.

Even before the battle of Landriano, the Pope had entered upon negotiations with the Emperor, and on 29th June, 1529, the Peace of Barcelona was signed. The Sack of Rome and the general indignation which it excited might well have thrown Clement definitely into the arms of France. He had, however, at last realised that Charles and not Francis could best serve the objects nearest to his heart. The French King, as the traditional champion of Florentine liberty, could not aid in a Medicean restoration, nor could he recover the places claimed by the Papacy from his Venetian and Ferrarese allies. Thus Clement VII. agreed to invest Charles with Naples and to crown him as Emperor in return for the restoration of the Medici to Florence and of Sforza to Milan. Peace with France followed quickly on the treaty with Clement, and Charles was

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free to set out for Italy. Bologna was ultimately fixed upon as the scene of the coronation, and thither during November, 1529, flocked not only the princes of Italy, but representatives from all parts of Charles's dominions. Francesco Sforza was among the number. Although Pope and Emperor had come to an understanding with regard to Milan, Sforza was not yet definitely included in the peace. Hence, despite the imperial safe-conduct with which he was furnished, it must have been with some trepidation that Francesco set out for Bologna. He found the political atmosphere more favourable to him than he could have ventured to hope. Charles had no wish to stir up fresh resistance in Italy by treating Milan as a conquered province, and a Sforza Duke under imperial protection was a compromise in which all parties would acquiesce. Francesco's first act on reaching Bologna was to return his safe-conduct to Charles, saying that he had no need of further protection than that afforded by the Emperor's justice and his own innocence. Pleased with this sign of confidence, Charles received Sforza favourably, and the old charge of implication in the Morone conspiracy was allowed to drop. Meanwhile Francesco's ill-health evoked general sympathy, and only one person raised objections to his restoration. This was Antonio de Leyva, who had held Milan for the Emperor in the face of every disadvantage, and who had hoped to become at least Lieutenant-General of the Duchy in reward for his services. Now the gouty hero was forced to sit in sullen silence, while Charles conversed affably with Sforza in German, a tongue which Leyva had not mastered. Eventually Leyva was appeased by the grant of Pavia for his life-time and of the fief of Monza for himself and his heirs in perpetuity. On 23rd December the treaty was signed. Francesco Sforza received the investiture of Milan at the price of 400,000 ducats, while he agreed to pay a further sum of 500,000 ducats within the next ten years. Thus all that Sforza gained by the League of Cognac, after four years of intermittent warfare, was the privilege of buying the investiture of Milan at a considerably higher price than had been agreed upon after the battle of Pavia.

The Duke of Milan remained in Bologna for two months longer in order that he might witness Charles's reception of the imperial crown from the reluctant hands of Clement VII. The ceremony took place on 24th February, 1530, the Emperor's thirtieth birthday and the fifth anniversary of the battle of Pavia. Sforza had already sent Alessandro Bentivoglio to govern Milan in his name, and on the termination of the Congress at Bologna he returned to the Duchy which he could once more call his own. Time was when Milan had been deemed the richest State in Italy, famed for its prosperity in trade, for the high standard of comfort existing among its inhabitants, and for the splendour and gaiety of its festivals. Yet Francesco now returned to a barren heritage, the very antithesis of its former self. Robbers and vagabonds infested the roads, wolves roamed through the deserted villages, seeking the victims of disease and war which had become their accustomed food. Few shops remained open in the towns. Even the nobles who had once contributed to the brilliancy of the Court of Milan, went about poorly and shabbily dressed. Nevertheless, the inhabitants had still a welcome left for their Duke, who had freed them from the oppressions of foreign soldiers and who now replaced Spanish officials by "honest and experienced men" of their own nation. Francesco, on his side, did his best to restore some measure of order and comfort among his subjects. During the latter part of the Imperialist occupation, provisions had become practically a State monopoly, and prices, which had been thus artificially raised, were difficult to reduce, when the disturbed state of the country prevented goods from being brought safely into Milan. Among Francesco's first reforms was the institution of a Captain of Police for the country districts, thanks to whom the roads of the Duchy became once more available for transit. The consequent fall in the prices at least mitigated the burden of the taxes, which Francesco had perforce to impose in order to pay his debt to the Emperor. In February, 1531, the whole sum of 400,000 ducats had been raised, and then, in accordance with his original agreement, the Emperor surrendered the Castello of Milan to Sforza. Massimiliano Stampa entered upon

his duties as Castellan and the last trace of the Imperialist occupation vanished with the Spanish garrison.

Thirty-seven years had been needed for the poison, which had been instilled into the system of Milan in 1494, to work itself out. The process of expelling the evil had sapped the strength, both of the State and of the Sforza dynasty, beyond hope of recovery. During the few remaining years of her independence, Milan enjoyed but a faint reflection of her past glories. The Castello Sforzesco became once more the centre of a Court, but at the head of that Court was a Duke who seemed an old man before he was forty and who, even if he lived, could not hope to be anything but an invalid. The Duchy was free from foreign armies, but its independence of the Empire was merely nominal and its financial exhaustion placed it at the mercy of every roving adventurer.

Two events which occurred during Francesco's short reign revealed to the full the weakness of his position. A certain Gian Giacomo dei Medici¹ had profited by the war to make his own fortune at the expense of the Duchy of Milan. Originally Castellan of Musso for the League, he had become, by a skilful change of sides, the virtual ruler of the Lake of Como. From the Rocca di Musso near Menaggio, he dominated the western shores of the lake, while the possession of Lecco gave him control of its south-eastern branch. Now in 1531 he sought to extend his sphere of influence northwards by the occupation of Chiavenna. Sforza's attempt to dislodge him led to a war of some months' duration, the expenses of which made it necessary to revive the grist tax. Serious riots in Cremona ensued and the Duke could only buy peace on terms which ill suited his dignity. Gian Giacomo was rewarded for his evil doings by the grant of Marignano with the title of Marquis, while he yielded the fortresses which he had usurped for a compensation of 35,000 ducats. If the episode of the Castellan of Musso showed Francesco's powerlessness to deal with a rebel subject, the affair of Alberto Maraviglia revealed his entire subordination to the will of the Emperor. Mara-

¹ Gian Giacomo was the brother of Giovanni Angelo dei Medici, afterwards Pope Pius IV., and the uncle of Carlo Borromeo.

viglia was a Milanese who had migrated to France during the reign of Louis XII. In 1526 he returned to Italy bringing with him a letter of introduction from Massimiliano Sforza who pronounced him to be "most desirous of serving our House".¹ From that time Maraviglia remained with the Duke of Milan as the unofficial representative of the French King. When Francesco was restored to his inheritance, Maraviglia proposed, in the name of Francis I., that the Duke should marry a French princess. Francesco, although he welcomed an opportunity for coquetting with France and expressed himself most grateful to the King, had perforce to decline the offer, saying that "in this matter of our marriage, the resolution to take this or that person depends upon the will of His Imperial Majesty".² In spite of the secrecy which was preserved as to Maraviglia's true position, his presence in Milan did not long escape the vigilant eyes of Leyva. In 1533 he reported the matter to Charles V., who demanded explanations. Sforza thereupon resolved to justify himself before the Emperor at the expense of the unhappy envoy. A quarrel arose between Maraviglia and a member of the Castiglione family which culminated in Castiglione's death during a street skirmish. After a hurried trial Maraviglia was beheaded in prison, on the pretext of his concern in this illicit warfare. There is little doubt that the whole affair was arranged as a convenient means of disposing of the obnoxious French representative. To such miserable intrigues, characteristic of some petty Romagnol despot, was the last Sforza reduced in order to maintain himself upon his tottering throne.

Charles V. meanwhile pursued a definite policy with regard to Milan. His chief object was to deprive Francis I. of a foothold in Italy by binding the various native rulers to the Empire by the closest ties possible. Hence in February, 1533, Sforza was included in the general League of Italian States, which Charles had exerted himself to procure. A few weeks later Milan was honoured with an imperial visit of four days'

¹ Archivio di Stato di Milano, *Potenze Sovrane, Massimiliano Sforza, Vicende personali*, 3rd July, 1526.

² *Loc. cit.*, *Francesco II.*, 8th Oct., 1531.

duration. The Castello was decorated for the occasion with Charles's motto *Plus ultra*, while the imperial eagles figured over the entrance. "As far as the Emperor was concerned," Burigozzo declares, "there was no great pomp, yet he was suitably dressed and he had a very pleasing expression." From this time, Charles V. scanned the list of his relations with a view to providing Francesco Sforza with a wife who would bring him into the Hapsburg family system. The candidate selected was Christina of Denmark, the Emperor's niece, and before Charles sailed from Genoa the marriage treaty had been drafted. Christina's dowry was fixed at 100,000 ducats. Moreover, in consideration of the expenses connected with the wedding, Francesco begged the Emperor to forego further payment of his debt. His chief desire was to do His Majesty's will, but the revenues for 1534 were already partly forestalled and therefore he implored him not to demand what was impossible.¹ So great had been the sacrifices of his subjects, that Francesco even doubted whether suitable wedding gifts would be made to his bride. Hence deputies from the subject-towns were summoned to Milan in order that the Duke himself might persuade them to do their utmost on this occasion. Despite their impoverished condition, the towns responded loyally to Francesco's request. They determined to receive their future Duchess with every mark of honour if only to show "the love that they bore towards their Prince". Massimiliano Stampa had started for the Court of the Netherlands, where he was to wed Christina by proxy, in August, 1533. Yet it was not until 3rd May, 1535, that Francesco's bride made her entry into Milan.² Then, for the last time in the history of the Sforza, the familiar route from the Porta Ticinese to the Duomo was adorned with triumphal arches. Along it passed a splendid procession, headed by 200 of the Milanese aristocracy every one of them "looking like an Emperor," with his suit of white velvet and his waving plumes. Last of all came a *baldac-*

¹ Instructions to the Milanese ambassador, July, 1533 (Archivio di Stato di Milano, *Potenze Sovrane, Francesco II., Vicende particolari*).

² Cf. Avenati, P., *Entrata di Cristina sposa di Francesco II. Duca di Milano*. Milan, 1903.

chino of white and gold, surrounded by the doctors of Milan, all eager to take their turn in holding it, while beneath the *bal-dacchino* rode the fifteen-year-old bride. Christina's blue dress matched the colour of her eyes and she seemed to the enthusiastic spectators "more like a vision than a human being". The interior of the Duomo was also gorgeously decorated, so much so that "to enter it was like stepping into Paradise". From thence Christina went to the Castello to join her husband, who had been watching from a private window the procession in which etiquette did not permit him to appear. For the rest of the day the citizens made merry after their own fashion, having obtained special permission from the Duke to remain in the streets until a late hour in the evening.

Those who enjoyed the festivities of that May-day must have looked back upon them in after years as the last manifestation of the glories of the ducal regime. Francesco lived but eighteen months after his wedding. On 1st November, 1535, Milan awoke to the news that the last of the Sforza had died during the night, and that the feeble thread upon which hung the independence of the Duchy had broken beneath the strain. In a letter to Charles V., Christina said that her husband had been suffering for some days past "from debility in his limbs and especially in his hands, such as had troubled him before". Yet there was no reason to suppose that his life was in danger until three days before his death, when he was seized with fever, "in the course of which he passed yesterday evening to a better life".¹ The sight of her invalid husband, who even at the time of his wedding could not stand without the aid of a stick, must have come as a shock to the girl-bride. Yet tradition relates that they loved one another dearly, and Christina now mourned her loss "with incredible bitterness and such effusion of tears as cannot be expressed".² The letters of condolence which poured in from all parts of the Duchy leave no doubt as to the genuine affection which Francesco inspired among his subjects. His popularity was, indeed, partly due to the glamour which hung

¹ Archivio di Stato di Milano, *Potenze Sovrane, Francesco II., Vicende particolari.*

² *Ibid.*

round the last Sforza Duke. Nevertheless, the scanty notices of his character which have survived, show that Francesco possessed considerable intellectual qualities and some measure of personal charm. When Francesco went to Rome as his brother's ambassador, in 1513, he created quite an impression by the fluency of his improvised Latin speeches. Four years later, one who saw him at Trent pronounced him to be a great contrast to his brother, in that he was "very literary, energetic and prudent".¹ During the first five years of his reign this energy and prudence were clearly visible, while, after the fatal siege of 1526, ill-health is more than sufficient to account for any deterioration in his character. The citizens of Milan showed their grief at Francesco's death by making his funeral ceremonies more than usually lengthy. Hence it was not until 19th November that the last Sforza Duke was laid to rest in the Duomo. High hopes had been centred in the possible issue of the Danish marriage. Now that these hopes were shattered Charles V. reluctantly accepted Milan as a lapsed fief, while its ultimate destination remained for some years an unsolved problem. Had Francesco Sforza left an heir, the fate of the Duchy might have been very different. During the comparatively peaceful years of the sixteenth century, Milan might well have experienced some such revival as did Florence under the later Medici. Yet no Cosimo arose to revive the fallen fortunes of the House of Sforza or to save Milan from the inevitable loss of identity and independence which followed on her absorption into the vast Hapsburg inheritance.

Perhaps chief among the many charms of Italian States from the historical point of view is the fact that they defy classification. No one despotism is exactly like another, either in the causes which produced it or in its subsequent development. How did the Sforza rule in Milan arise?—what were the bases of its authority?—what were the causes of its failure? are questions which have already been touched upon incidentally in the course of these pages. Yet the philosophy of the

¹ Antonio de Beatis, *Die Reise des Kardinals Luigi d'Aragona, 1517-1518* (ed. by Pastor, 1905).

Sforza dynasty, if it may so be called, can best be realised when their rule in Milan is viewed as a whole.

Francesco Sforza's acquisition of Milan represents primarily the triumph of the *condottiere*, the victory of natural gifts and the power of the sword, unaided by a legal title or advantages of birth. Nevertheless, the State which he founded cannot be reckoned among those which had their origin in conquest. It is rather one of the many examples of despotisms which arose through the conversion of a Podestà or Captain from a servant of the Republic into its ruler. The title of Captain-General, which the Ambrosian Republic bestowed upon Sforza in order to secure a defender against the Venetians, gave him his first hold upon the Duchy. Once having advanced so far, the throne of Milan formed the almost inevitable sequel. Besides this immediate cause, the Sforza owed their position in Milan to the fact that the conditions which produced the rule of the Visconti still prevailed. If there were doubt on the matter beforehand, the career of the Ambrosian Republic finally proved the need for an individual ruler in Milan. Only a prince could bring Milan and the subject-towns of the Duchy under one rule. Only a prince could over-ride the factions, which raged between Guelph and Ghibelline, and the class hatred which pitted merchant against artisan. At the same time, the submission of Milan to Francesco Sforza was made immeasurably easier by his relationship with the Visconti. It was as Filippo Maria's son-in-law that he claimed the right to control the destinies of Milan. But for Bianca's presence, the impression of conquest would have been hard to remove, and Francesco's career in Milan might have proved as transitory as that of Carlo Gonzaga.

Through the absence of any legal title, the hereditary claims of the Sforza were not such as to be pressed far. Hence, as they had no wish to lay stress upon the part which force had played in their rise to power, the Sforza Dukes based their authority chiefly upon popular consent. The desire to conciliate the people is plainly visible throughout the period. It can be seen in Francesco's Capitulations with the citizens, and again in Simonetta's remittance of taxes upon the accession of

Gian Galeazzo. The pains spent upon the economic development of the Duchy, the foundation of churches and hospitals, the very magnificence of the Court sprang largely from the necessity of winning popularity as a guarantee for the permanency of the dynasty. Nevertheless, the Sforza in no sense identified themselves with the people. Their rule, at its best, was a beneficent despotism, which promoted the interests of its subjects without any attempt to obtain their participation. At its worst, it treated the people as so much material to be used in the ruler's interest. Among the most characteristic features of the period is the gradual modification of the government in the direction of absolutism. Under Francesco and Galeazzo, the Ducal Councils were regarded as the monarchical features in the government which tended to encroach upon the older and more constitutional elements. Under Lodovico, the Ducal Councils were, in their turn, made to bow before the Secretaries of State, who were servants rather than advisers of the Duke. Equally characteristic are the constant efforts of the Dukes to exchange popular consent for a legal title, as the basis of their authority. Despite Francesco's emphatic recognition of his election by the people, he lost no opportunity for soliciting imperial investiture. Galeazzo postponed the ceremony of election until he had made sure that the imperial diploma was not forthcoming. Lodovico apologised profusely to Maximilian for his acceptance of the Duchy from the hands of the people, declaring that the exigencies of the moment alone prevented him from waiting to obtain imperial sanction. For all this, Lodovico proved in his own person the small practical value of imperial investiture when unaccompanied by the popular consent which he professed to despise. Moreover, if loss of popular favour helped to drive Lodovico from Milan, it was popular consent which rendered possible the return of his sons. The persistent demands of Milan for a Sforza Duke, determined the accession of Massimiliano in the face of rival claimants and of European jealousies. But for the loyalty and self-sacrifice of his subjects, Francesco II.'s short-lived triumph would have been impossible.

In spite of the importance of popular consent, the failure of

the Sforza Dukes to hold Milan is due primarily to the break-down of their foreign policy. "The State of Milan," says a sixteenth century writer, "is a little tract of country from which a man may issue in a short day's journey, even if he should start from the centre. Nevertheless, this small plot of ground has already brought infinite troubles not only upon Italy but upon the surrounding countries." After bewailing the treasure and the blood that had been spent over the Duchy, the writer concludes: "The cause of all this is without doubt, not the great fertility and abundance, not the fair cities, castles and villas to be found in the province, but the advantages of its situation, which render it most easy to conquer and most convenient as a stepping-stone to further conquests".¹ In other words, the Duchy of Milan formed the connecting link between Italy and the rest of Europe. The exclusion of the foreigner was necessary to its very existence as an independent State. It was the necessity of preventing ultramontane interference that gave distinction to the foreign policy of the Visconti. With regard to the maintenance of friendly relations with the European Powers, and more especially with France, their policy was inherited by the Sforza. Where, however, Gian Galeazzo Visconti strove to protect himself against foreign intervention by uniting all Italy under his rule, Francesco Sforza sought the same object in the Triple Alliance, which aimed at keeping the peace between the Five States in order that they might present a united front against the foreigner. To a large extent, the break-down of their foreign policy was due to causes beyond the control of the Sforza Dukes. If René of Anjou had been more competent and Charles VII. less hampered by the opposition of the Dauphin, the French occupation of both Naples and Milan might have taken place in the fifties. Thus the success of the Triple Alliance was partly owing to the pacific policy of Louis XI. and to the long minority of his son. When Charles VIII. resolved to invade Italy, a force had been set in motion which the Italian Powers could hardly control. Yet, if Charles VIII.'s invasion could

¹ Alberi, E., *Due relazioni di Milano del tempo di Filippo II.* (Relazioni Venete, Serie ii., vol. i. Florence, 1839.)

not have been prevented, an alliance between the Five States would have robbed the expedition of half its terrors. This was rendered impossible by the jealousies and rivalries which divided the rulers of Italy and in which the Sforza Dukes of Milan had their full share.

Considering the circumstances of Lodovico's fall, there is a double significance in Da Paullo's assertion that Milan owed her sufferings to "those cursed parties" (*maledette parti*) which proved the ruin of Italy. Despite their would-be neutrality, the Sforza Dukes were not able to over-ride faction in their own dominions. They were forced to rest upon the Ghibelline nobility, with the result that a Guelphic party in every town looked to some hostile Power against their natural ruler. The existence of internal troubles heightened the jealousy and suspicion which existed between Milan and her neighbours, until each State was ready to seek foreign aid in order to gain a momentary advantage over a rival. Just as internal factions forced the Italian towns to call in a foreign Podestà to keep the peace, so the rivalries between States produced the invitation to a foreign prince, who followed the example of the Podestà in turning the summons to his own advantage.

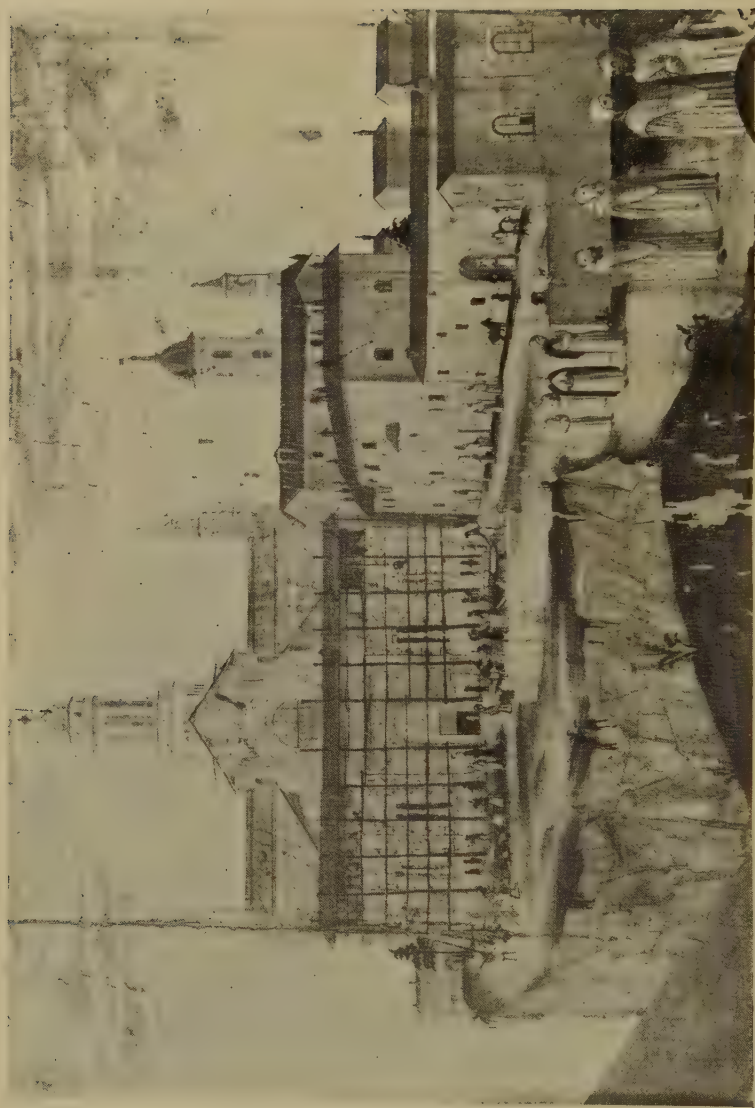
CHAPTER XI

ARCHITECTURE

“**W**HILE the Duke lived, he never ceased to build.” Such is Cagnola’s comment upon the reign of Francesco Sforza, and it is equally applicable to those of his two sons. Nevertheless, the history of Architecture under the House of Sforza, centres not so much round the ducal patrons or the architects and sculptors whom they employed as round the buildings themselves. The Certosa of Pavia, for example, bears the mark of no one patron or architect. Its church, beginning with the long high naves and their Gothic pillars, and culminating in the full Renaissance work of the façade, contains in itself the story of Lombard architecture. A crowd of workers were attracted thither for the sake of the artistic education which the Certosa afforded, each generation in turn imbibing the tradition of its predecessors to such an extent as to make individual work in many cases indistinguishable. Each succeeding Duke, from Gian Galeazzo Visconti to Francesco Sforza II., contributed his share towards the monument which formed the glory of no one man but of two dynasties. What is true of the Certosa is also true of the Duomo and Castello of Milan and indeed of all the chief buildings in the Duchy. The leading architects of the day were employed, not on one building alone, but on each in turn. Hence it is by an account of the great monuments of the Duchy, of those which originated under the Visconti and were completed by the Sforza, of those begun by Francesco Sforza and of those begun by Lodovico, that the architecture of the period can best be understood.

Foremost among the building operations inherited from the

Visconti were those connected with the two great foundations of Duke Gian Galeazzo, the Duomo of Milan and the Certosa of Pavia. Of these, the Duomo owes comparatively little to the House of Sforza. Founded in 1386, it is, as the Gothic character of the general design testifies, essentially a Visconti monument. Hence the Sforza Dukes are only responsible for details in the vast work, details, moreover, which must take their place amid a long series of additions culminating in the new façade of our own days. According to the scheme made by Gian Galeazzo, the body immediately concerned with the building of the cathedral was the "Fabbrica del Duomo," a quasi-independent organisation with its own revenues and its special privileges, all of which Francesco Sforza hastened to confirm upon his accession. Two years later, the Fabbrica showed its independence by choosing from the two candidates nominated by the Duke for the vacant post of architect, the Milanese Giovanni Solari rather than Francesco's Florentine protégé, Filarete. Giovanni was succeeded by his brother, Guinforte, who was architect both of the Duomo and of the Certosa until his death in 1481. Nevertheless, Francesco played a good part by the Duomo. In 1465 Bartolomeo Gadio, who had for long been the Duke's right hand in all his own building schemes, was appointed Commissioner General of the Cathedral Works. Thanks to his influence, some order was restored to the administration, while the Duke's consent was obtained to the appropriation of a tenth part of the Castello building fund for the Fabbrica del Duomo. The chief work in the Duomo to be carried out under Sforza auspices was the *tiburio*, or octagonal dome supported by four arches, which marked the junction between the nave and the transepts. Quarrels with German artists, who had been consulted in the matter, proved a fertile source of delay until, in 1490, Lodovico Il Moro summoned a congress of Italians to determine the form which the *tiburio* should take. Leonardo and Bramante were among the number. Thanks to them, it was decided to adhere to Lombard traditions and to entrust the new work to the native architect Amadeo. In 1481 Amadeo had succeeded Guinforte Solari in his office at the Duomo, and he was now



A. Ferrario

THE CERTOSA OF PAVIA IN COURSE OF CONSTRUCTION

ALTAR-CLOTH BY BORGOGNONE

eagerly sought after both as an architect and as a sculptor. Hence Il Moro must needs stipulate that Amadeo should "attend to his business" and not absent himself unless he were required elsewhere for the work of the Court.¹ Meanwhile Cristoforo Solari, commonly called Il Gobbo, made statues of S. Ambrose, S. Augustine and S. Gregory to stand in niches over the columns, and in September, 1500, the Annals of the Cathedral could record that "the *tiburio* is finished to the great pleasure of the citizens". Above the *tiburio* rose Amadeo's spire, while in the adjoining gallery was placed a medallion of the architect with the inscription: "IO. ANTONIUS HOMODEUS VENERE FABRICE MLI ARCHITECTUS." The whole, as the outcome of a symposium of artists, and representing, as it does, the transition from the Gothic to the Renaissance style, remains the most important example of fifteenth century work which the Duomo contains.²

The Certosa of Pavia, as the Duomo of Milan, was left by Gian Galeazzo Visconti financially independent of his successors in the Duchy. It owed its origin to the vow of Caterina Visconti to found a Carthusian Monastery at Pavia, which she charged her husband to fulfil after her death. Founded in 1396, monks were already installed there, and the foundations of the church were laid when Gian Galeazzo died leaving a yearly revenue to be used for the completion of the work and afterwards to be transferred to the poor of Pavia. Unlike the Duomo, however, the Certosa offered large scope for the influence of the Sforza Dukes. Owing to the unsettled state of the Duchy during the early years of the fifteenth century and to the fact that the monks had concentrated their efforts upon the refectory, chapter house, library and other parts of the monastery, the church in 1450 remained practically as it was in 1402. This pause of fifty years had important results. If the church had been completed by Gian Galeazzo it would have been a Gothic building after the style of the Duomo. In 1450 the Gothic tradition was dying out, and the church was

¹ Cf. Malaguzzi-Valeri, *Amadeo, scultore e architetto*. Bergamo, 1904.

² Malaguzzi-Valeri, *Il Duomo di Milano nel Quattrocento*. Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft, 1901.

continued upon the lines of the classic revival connected in the Duchy of Milan with the name of Sforza.

Francesco Sforza welcomed the work of finishing the Certosa as an opportunity for showing himself a true successor of the Visconti. Hence he turned a deaf ear to the clamours of Pavia for the transfer of the revenues, and he even exempted the Carthusians from the tax levied throughout the Duchy for the war of 1452. Thanks to the new impulse given by Francesco, the main part of the Certosa church was built between the years 1453-1470, under the direction of Guinforte Solari. While the general lines of the church were determined by the foundations laid during the reign of Gian Galeazzo Visconti, the classic apses of the choir and transepts and the terra-cotta walls breathed a new and essentially Lombard spirit. At the same time, the work of internal decoration was put in hand, a task which trained a generation of sculptors who were to play a prominent part in the future.

Here, as elsewhere, the ducal influence showed itself in bringing artists from beyond the borders of the State to share in the work at the Certosa. In 1464 a Venetian architect is mentioned in the Certosa account books as furnishing "certain columns of red marble"¹ for the cloisters. A year later, Vincenzo Foppa of Brescia received payment for "certain figures of prophets made for the great cloister".² Later again, in 1469, Galeazzo Maria, upon the special petition of the monks, allowed his Florentine architect, Benedetto Ferrini, to visit the Certosa works twice a month, if he could do so without prejudice to his work at the Castello of Milan. The fresh ideals which these men brought with them were imbibed by the young students working at the Certosa, chief of whom were the brothers Cristoforo and Antonio Mantegazza and Giovanni Antonio Amadeo. Bred in the traditions of the old Campione school of sculpture, the new influences brought to bear upon their work opened for them the way to progress. They learned to appreciate richness of decoration and colour. They learned, above all, to aim at natural rather than conventional treatment

¹ Beltrami, *La Certosa di Pavia*. Milan, 1895.

² *Ibid.*

of the scenes and figures which they wrought in stone. In the work of the Mantegazza brothers, the desire for realism produced a tendency towards exaggeration which they never entirely mastered. Amadeo, however, although he passed through a stage when his dramatic feeling outran his knowledge of anatomy, attained in his best work to a high standard of beauty. He began his career at the Certosa when a boy of nineteen (1466), and the decoration of the doorway leading to the smaller cloister was among his earliest productions.¹ The sweetness of the angel faces which crowned the principal group of figures at once excited attention. When Amadeo passed from thence to execute the beautiful tomb of Medea Colleone at Bergamo, his reputation as a sculptor was made.

Meanwhile, Francesco Sforza took the keenest interest in all that went on at the Certosa. When the work showed signs of flagging, owing to the want of agreement between Guinforte Solari and some of the older architects who had been concerned with the Certosa since its foundation, the Duke sent the invaluable Gadio to smooth over difficulties. Francesco himself frequently visited the monastery to inspect the progress of the building or to do the honours to his foreign guests. A record has been preserved of one such visit when Count Galeazzo accompanied some ambassadors thither in his father's stead.² Starting in the morning, they enjoyed a run with the harriers on the way and arrived at the Certosa in time for dinner. After a visit to the church, the Prior entertained them at a repast which included "such variety of food and dressing as would not be believed". They were then shown the cells and the rest of the monastery before returning home.

Continually egged on to fresh efforts by each other's presence, it is no wonder that the workers of the Certosa grew more ambitious in their schemes and less anxious to see the completion of a monument which offered so wide a scope for

¹ The work especially attributed to Amadeo, is the group over the doorway on the cloister side, in which S. John Baptist and S. Bruno present Carthusian monks to the Madonna and Child enthroned amid singing angels. Over the doorway inside the church are medallions of Gian Galeazzo Visconti, Filippo Maria Visconti, and Francesco Sforza.

² Beltrami, *Certosa*.

their activity. The monks, for their part, were equally desirous of postponing the day when they must renounce their revenues. Hence, when, in 1473, Guinforte Solari proffered a design for the façade following more or less closely upon the general lines of the church, it was rejected as altogether too simple and unornamental in character. On the recommendation of Galeazzo Maria, the façade was entrusted to the brothers Mantegazza. When Amadeo returned from Bergamo in the following year, Galeazzo's influence procured for him an important share in the work. For the next few years, all three artists were busy in their workshop over the bas-reliefs and statues which were afterwards to be woven into the general design of the façade. There followed one of those pauses which were frequent in the artistic enterprises of the day, and it was not until 1491 that the façade was begun in good earnest. By that time Guinforte Solari and Cristoforo Mantegazza were dead. Thus, although others probably helped to determine the general lines of the façade, to Amadeo fell the practical execution. Hence the wealth of decoration, the richly adorned candelabra which form the columns of the windows, the groups of children bearing the Sforza arms, the way in which every available space is filled with tracery, everything, in short, which makes the Certosa façade what it is. Amadeo's decoration of the façade occupied the years 1491-1497, and thus it corresponds with the golden age of the Court of Milan, with the period of Il Moro's greatest prosperity. It is no mere flight of fancy to regard this "magnificent hybrid," in which ingenuity of invention and an exuberant love of beauty obscure the sense of simplicity and of proportion, as an illustration in stone of the age which it represents.

Of all the Dukes of Milan, none cared more for the Certosa than did Lodovico Il Moro. It was in his eyes the chief among the many glories of his State, and he spared no pains to bring all its parts up to the same high level of magnificence. The greater part of the stained glass dates from the reign of Galeazzo as is testified by the introduction of his favourite device of the buckets into some of the windows. To the reign of Lodovico, however, belong the decoration of the roof, the

pictures for the cells, the frescoes and altar-pieces, which are connected with the name of Borgognone. In one instance, Borgognone's pictures form a commentary upon the progress of the building. The fresco which adorns the apse of the south transept represents Gian Galeazzo Visconti offering a model of the Certosa to the Virgin. Here the façade is taken from Solari's design, while in the beautiful little picture of Christ bearing the Cross, painted about the year 1497, the Certosa is seen in the background with Amadeo's façade in the course of construction. Among the features of the Certosa for which Lodovico was directly responsible, were the fine choir-stalls in intarsia. Visiting the Certosa one day, he decided that the existing stalls were "in no way worthy of the rest of the building".¹ He at once engaged a craftsman to execute new choir-stalls "of good intarsia and not painted"² after designs furnished by Borgognone. Despite the progress of the Certosa, the body of its founder still lacked a fitting tomb. In 1474, Gian Galeazzo's remains had been moved from the Basilica of S. Peter to the Certosa where they rested behind the high altar, waiting the erection of a mausoleum. At length in 1494, Lodovico insisted that the work should be put in hand. In accordance with his wishes the gifted Roman sculptor, Gian Cristoforo Romano, was employed upon the effigy of Gian Galeazzo, and upon bas-reliefs for the sarcophagus. Before the tomb was completed the storms of foreign invasion had broken over the Duchy, and it was only in 1562 that the body was transferred to its last resting-place.

In May, 1497, the consecration of the church came as a crown to Lodovico's achievements for the Certosa. The ceremony, as performed by the Papal Legate in the presence of the Duke, is commemorated in one of the bas-reliefs upon the west doorway. It proved to be the culminating point in the history of the Certosa. In the following year, when the façade was growing daily more splendid, the work stopped short. A few months later, Amadeo, absorbed in his business at the cathedrals of Milan and Pavia, finally resigned his post.

¹ Luzio-Renier, *Arch. Stor. Lomb.*, 1890, p. 114.

² Beltrami, *Certosa*,

Fast upon his departure came the fall of Il Moro, and in the troublous years which followed the Certosa had but fitful attention. The lower part of the façade was, indeed, completed in Amadeo's style, but in the upper part only the bare architectural lines were followed, broken by a few reliefs taken from earlier models. In 1514 the Prior petitioned for a large increase in the number of monks who might be received there, a change which must have done much to destroy the calm and solitude which had distinguished the monastery. At the same time, he asked for numerous alterations in the cells, dormitory and refectory in order that they might be brought up to a more modern standard of comfort. Finally, in 1542, the poor of Pavia received the revenues for which they had waited nearly a hundred and fifty years. One other episode in the history of the Certosa concerns the House of Sforza. In 1564 the recumbent figures of Il Moro and Beatrice, originally made by Il Gobbo for S. Maria delle Grazie, were moved to the Certosa, where they have remained until this day. Lying at the entrance to the north transept, they are surrounded on all sides by memories of their race. In the apse, hard by, is Borgognone's fresco with the figures of Francesco and Lodovico Sforza kneeling before the Virgin. North of the choir is the doorway into the sacristy with medallions of the four first Sforza Dukes. Above the doorway into the *lavabo* on the south are corresponding medallions of the four Duchesses, their wives. Portraits of the House of Sforza wrought by Amadeo, the Mantegazza, Il Gobbo and Borgognone, medallions, tomb and fresco, are alike witnesses to the memory of those who in their various spheres of influence helped, in no small measure, to make the Certosa of Pavia one of the wonders of the world.

Two other buildings dating from the Visconti era require some notice. These are the Castello of Pavia and the Corte Ducale in Milan. As a favourite residence of the Visconti since the days of its foundation by Galeazzo II. (1360), the Castello of Pavia passed to Francesco Sforza in a condition which seemed to admit of little improvement. Yet its very magnificence tempted the founder of a new dynasty to place

his own mark upon it, and in 1456 the chief painters of the Duchy were employed to decorate the Castello with frescoes. The splendid hunting-ground afforded by the park, made Galeazzo Maria particularly fond of Pavia. Hence during his reign the work of decoration was continued on a far more extensive scale. From 1466 to 1475, local artists were covering practically the whole interior with scenes from the history of the reigning House. On one wall, Galeazzo Maria was represented discussing matters of State with Cecco Simonetta. Another was devoted to the marriage of Bona of Savoy at Amboise, another to her first meeting with the Duke. All traces of these frescoes have disappeared and the Castello is now used as a barrack. One can only deplore the loss of a gallery of contemporary portraits which would have been, from the historical point of view alone, invaluable. Galeazzo also employed Benedetto Ferrini upon the chapel in the Castello. When in November, 1473, Ferrini left his work there for a time, Gadio, although crippled with gout, insisted on paying the chapel a visit of inspection. In a letter to his trusted friend Cecco Simonetta, Gadio drew a mournful picture of the disorganisation which he found. Since his arrival, however, and that of Messer Guinforte Solari he could thank God that the work was placed upon a better footing. The episode is an amusing testimony to the constant friction between Lombard and Tuscan architects in the service of the Dukes of Milan.

"The Court of the Lords of Milan having fallen ill through want of food and being half-dead, I restored it to health, without which restoration it would soon have ended its days." In such quaint terms does Filarete describe his work upon the Corte Ducale during the early years of Francesco's reign. The Corte Ducale, or Corte d'Arengo, lay in the centre of Milan on the southern side of the Piazza del Duomo. It had been the original palace of the Visconti before the building of the Castello, and Francesco's restoration of it won for him the general approval of the citizens. Here, too, the artists of the Lombard school covered the walls with frescoes, and throughout Francesco's reign it remained the only ducal

residence in Milan. In 1772 the last trace of it was removed to make way for the existing Palazzo Reale.

When the citizens of the Ambrosian Republic set themselves to wipe out all traces of the tyranny by destroying the Castello of Milan, they did not apparently finish their task. What exactly was left standing it is hard to discover. Yet it is clear that Francesco Sforza must have utilised some parts of the Visconti fortress or he would not have been able to lodge soldiers in a tower of the Rocchetta as early as August, 1451.¹ The square shape of the Castello with a tower at each angle, after the style of the Castello of Pavia, is a further indication of the survival of Visconti traditions. Nevertheless the Castello of Milan is for all practical purposes a Sforza monument. To the Sforza were due its distinguishing characteristic, theirs is the name which it bears to-day, and theirs the history with which it is primarily associated. Once armed with the petition for the rebuilding of a fortress in Milan, Francesco wasted no time over preliminaries. He realised that the renewal of war with Venice was only a question of time and that he stood in urgent need of a place of defence within the capital. Hence the first architects were chosen quite as much for their military authority and for their devotion to the House of Sforza as for their technical skill. The Castello derived a regular income for the purposes of building from a monthly charge upon the taxes. Besides this, a special duty was imposed to meet the expenses of transport, and the Castello was given a monopoly in mortar which it enjoyed until long after the ostensible reason for the privilege had ceased to exist. Not until 1502, upon the petition of the citizens to Louis XII., was mortar once more sold freely in Milan. Despite these provisions, the work constantly suffered from lack of money. Francesco found himself obliged to demand frequent payments from the Castello funds for other purposes. Salaries were irregularly paid, and so bad was the financial reputation of the Castello that, when tenders were invited for the provision of certain building materials, it was necessary to give special

¹ Cf. Beltrami, *Castello di Milano*,

notice that "good and real payment" would be made.¹ Francesco's absence from Milan during the war with Venice prevented him from exercising personal supervision at the Castello, and, probably in consequence of this, the first years were marked by numerous quarrels and difficulties amongst those engaged in the work. In December, 1451, the chief architect, one Giovanni da Milano, died of plague. The Duke gave instructions that he should be tended during his illness as if he were "one of our own brothers or sons,"² and he mourned his loss with genuine grief. Giovanni was succeeded by Filippo Scozioli of Ancona, who proved himself both indolent and dishonest. "We wish you to show more diligence so that you should not appear to have slept directly after our departure,"³ Francesco wrote on one occasion. Finally, after various charges of dishonesty in dealing with the Castello revenues, Filippo was fined and imprisoned for three years in the fortress which he had helped to build. In 1452 the name of Filarete first occurs in connection with the Castello, and his arrival provoked fresh controversy with the Lombard workers. "This Florentine wants to do everything in his own way,"⁴ they complained, when Filarete agitated for the use of marble in the place of *sarizzo*, or Lombard granite, for certain decorations. As the result of these troubles a petition was addressed to the Duke in 1453, for a man "who will permanently superintend the work and who will make himself feared as was Giovanni da Milano".⁵ Francesco replied by the appointment of Bartolomeo Gadio as Commissioner General of Works, which post he held for twenty-five years. Thanks to his untiring efforts, the administration was placed upon a better footing and the building went on amid fewer impediments.

In 1452 the building of the Castello was so far advanced as to admit of the appointment of a castellan, and early in the year, the Duke's kinsman Foschino Attendolo took command of the fortress. Although throughout Francesco's reign the Castello was only used for military purposes, the skeleton

¹ Beltrami, *Castello di Milano*.

³ *Op. cit.*

⁴ *Op. cit.*

² *Op. cit.*

⁵ *Op. cit.*

of the future palace arose under his auspices. His successor in the Duchy had only to make additional rooms within the main building and other such minor changes in order to render the Castello habitable. At the two angles of the fortress facing the city were round towers of granite. Intended solely for purposes of defence, and with the Visconti viper done in marble, flanked by the initials FR. SF. as their only embellishment, the towers might well wound the susceptibilities of the ever suspicious citizens. To counteract their effect Francesco determined that the central tower of the façade over the main entrance should be elaborately decorated. The task was entrusted to Filarete, and his work, following closely upon the description of the ideal fortress in his *Trattato*, remained one of the most striking features of the Castello until its total destruction by an explosion of gunpowder in 1521. Beyond the main entrance the way lay across a large courtyard, known as the Piazza d'Armi, to the Corte Ducale. This was intended to be the ducal residence, while, in a line with it, stood the Rocchetta, or inner fortress, which could be defended against the rest of the Castello, if need be, and which could only be approached by means of a drawbridge from the Piazza d'Armi. At the angles of the Rocchetta and of the Corte Ducale were two towers corresponding with those facing the city, although unlike them in form, being square and divided into an upper and lower storey. The ducal treasure was kept in the lower room of the Rocchetta tower, while the Treasurer-General slept above, watching over his charge both by day and by night. Beyond the main building lay an outer line of fortifications. According to the current theory these fortifications were added after the Sforza era. Yet, as Signor Beltrami points out, the theory is hardly plausible, for without them both Rocchetta and Corte Ducale would have been open to every attack. Their existence deprived the Sforza Dukes of what is to-day the most attractive feature of the Castello, namely, the magnificent view of the Alps from the windows looking over the park. Such were the main outlines of the Castello Sforzesco in the days of its founder. A massive pile, impressive for its strength rather than for its beauty, and un-



THE CASTELLO SFORZESCO, MILAN

FROM S. MÜNSTER'S "COSMOGRAPHIA"

relieved by the wealth of internal decoration which was soon to transform it into the most sumptuous palace in Italy.

A new era began for the Castello when Galeazzo Maria resolved to bring his bride home thither in 1468. Among the improvements which the Duke ordered before taking up his abode in the Corte Ducale, were stabling for ninety horses and the provision of a room lined with wood which would keep out the cold. It is clear from this, and from other notices, that the Castello, with its draughty halls and big ill-fitting windows, was no ideal habitation in the winter months. From the time that the Court was installed in the Castello, the decoration of the rooms began in good earnest. The years 1469-1474 saw the origin of the Sala Celeste, with its sky-blue ceiling sprinkled with stars; of the Sala delle Colombine, adorned with Bona's favourite device of doves in the midst of flames; of the Sala degli Scarlioni, so called from the zigzag stripes in mulberry and white which covered its walls; of the Sala delle Caccie, decorated with hunting scenes; of the greater part of the rooms, in short, on both floors of the Corte Ducale. Galeazzo's chief architect in the Castello was Benedetto Ferrini, whose name figures with that of his master on the stairway of the Corte Ducale. Ferrini, moreover, was the moving spirit in the construction and decoration of the ducal chapel, which formed the most important part of Galeazzo's work for the Castello. The damaged remains of frescoes representing the Resurrection and the Annunciation which can still be seen in the roof and on the walls give but a faint reflection of its former glories. During the brief Regency of Bona, the decoration of the Castello was abandoned and attention was once more concentrated upon the fortifications. Hence the Torre di Bona di Savoia at the corner of the Rocchetta adjoining the Corte Ducale and opposite to the Torre del Tesoro. The architect of the tower, according to Corio, was Lodovico Marquis of Mantua. His work as an architect is mentioned by Filarete, and as the Marquis was in Milan at the time, helping to make peace between Bona and her brother-in-law, Corio's information is probably correct.

Under the auspices of Il Moro, the decoration of the Castello was carried, as, indeed, were all the artistic enterprises of the Duchy, to heights hitherto unknown. On the marriage of Gian Galeazzo to Isabella of Aragon elaborate preparations were made to do honour to the bride. A special suite of rooms was made ready in the Corte Ducale, while monasteries, nobles and merchants were alike called upon to lend their tapestries to decorate the Castello for the occasion. Lodovico's wedding in 1491 necessitated the formation of a separate household for Beatrice. Hence fresh improvements were introduced into the Rocchetta in order to provide her with suitable apartments there. At the same time, painters were summoned from all parts of the Duchy to adorn the walls and ceiling of the ballroom. Later again, Lodovico's elevation to the ducal throne was marked by the erection of that elegant addition to the Corte Ducale known as the Ponticella of Bramante. The arches of the Ponticella spanned the Castello trench and it thus formed a means of communication with the park and city, while a series of small rooms connected it on the other side with the Corte Ducale. Another feature of the Castello, which must have been executed by Bramante at about the same time, is the fresco of the thousand-eyed Argos, of which traces can still be seen upon the walls of the Sala del Tesoro. Between the years 1495-1498 Leonardo is known to have been at work in the Castello. Those among the recently discovered decorations which most distinctly bear the trace of his hand are in the lower room of the Corte Ducale tower, sometimes called the Camera grande delle Asse. Round the walls are painted trees of which the foliage covers the ceiling with a green canopy while golden cords are entwined in the branches after a characteristically Leonardesque pattern. Woven into the design are the arms of the Duke and Duchess and inscriptions commemorating their various claims to renown. Leonardo is also known to have assisted in the decoration of the Saletta Negra, a small room in the Corte Ducale which owes its name to the sad time when Il Moro ordered all his apartments to be hung in black while he mourned for Beatrice. It was at this juncture that Il Moro had his initials and those

of his wife placed upon Filarete's tower, upon the Torre di Bona and upon various other parts of the Castello.

The decorations in memory of his dead wife were the last which Lodovico undertook in the Castello. Before the end of 1498, the political situation forced him to concentrate his efforts upon its defences. Secret passages were repaired, trenches were dug out, walls were mended and the Castello was stocked with food and ammunition at a total cost of some 26,000 ducats. Moreover, an intricate system of signals was devised by which the garrison could make its wants known to the citizens. If boots were required for the soldiers, a woman's stocking would be shown twice; if cheese, a bodice. Bread, wine and ammunition had each their special sign. The sequel to these preparations is only too well known, and the brief siege, followed by Da Corte's infamous surrender, proved the beginning of evil days for the Castello. Fruitlessly attacked by Ascanio Sforza in 1500. Held by the French against Massimiliano in 1513, and by Massimiliano against the French in 1515. Besieged for fourteen months in the interests of Francesco II. in 1523 and held by him for eight months in 1526, the Castello experienced no less than six sieges before the close of the Sforza era. These vicissitudes formed but the prelude to still more numerous attacks at the hands of Spaniards, Austrians, French and Italians, who in turn competed for its possession. There is little wonder that when, after centuries of warfare, the Castello was no longer needed as a defence, it had suffered too great injuries to be considered as an ornament. Some twenty years ago it only escaped destruction through the intervention of a body of enlightened citizens, who have since devoted themselves to its restoration. Thanks to their efforts it is preserved to-day as a Museum of Antiquities, and as a standing witness to the past glories of Milan.

Side by side with the building of the Castello progressed that of Francesco's other great foundation, the Ospedale Maggiore. In April, 1456, the Duke issued a diploma dedicating a palace originally belonging to Bernabò Visconti and various other buildings between the churches of S. Nazaro and S. Stefano to the purpose of founding a hospital. A few

days later the foundation-stone was laid "with a solemn procession of all the clergy of Milan, in the presence of the Duke Francesco Sforza, Signora Bianca Maria and all their children, the Marquis of Mantua, the ambassador of King Alfonso of Aragon and many other gentlemen".¹ The design was entrusted to Filarete, who directed the work until 1465 and to whom is due the general character of the building, done in terra-cotta after the style of the early Renaissance in Lombardy. Filarete was directly responsible only for that part of the existing hospital which lies to the right of the entrance beyond the large central court. This court with the chapel opposite to the entrance and the wing on the left, corresponding with Filarete's original building, were added in the seventeenth century. Hence the hospital consisted, in the Sforza era, of a square with buildings running through it in the form of a cross. Four inner quadrangles were thus formed, each surrounded by colonnades the principal of which Foppa was employed to decorate with frescoes representing the foundation of the hospital, Francesco's presentation of a model to Pius II. and other scenes connected with the building.² One wing was reserved for men, the other for women, and at the junction of the four arms of the cross stood the chapel, so arranged as to serve for both parts of the hospital. Hard by ran the city canal whence water could be obtained for the various needs of the establishment. In all these contrivances can be traced the practical mind of Francesco Sforza, whose capacity for detail found equal scope in planning a hospital, which served as a model for all other institutions of the day, as in organising campaigns and marshalling armies. Filarete was succeeded in his office of architect by Guinforte Solari, who was followed in his turn by Amadeo. Bramante also worked at the hospital during his stay in Milan, contributing to the rich terra-cotta decorations which adorn the windows and the capitals of the colonnades. From the days of its founder

¹ Vasari, *Vite de Pittori*, Filarete.

² The pictures now in the central hall of the hospital date only from the seventeenth century, but they are probably copies of the earlier frescoes. Cf. Malaguzzi-Valeri, *Pittori Lombardi del Quattrocento*. Milan, 1902.

until now the Ospedale Maggiore has been in constant use. Some 20,000 patients are received there each year, and it still holds its place as one of the best managed hospitals in Italy.

Two churches in Milan were founded by Francesco Sforza and his wife. Bianca's church was dedicated to S. Niccolò of Tolentino, a holy man of the March whom Eugenius IV. had canonised in 1446, when Francesco still ruled in that province. Adjoining it was Francesco's foundation of S. Maria Incoronata, which to-day gives its name to the two churches united under one roof. The Visconti viper is still to be seen on the façade, while the church contains two monuments connected with the history of the Sforza. One is that of Francesco's brother, Archbishop Gabriele. The other commemorates the Treasurer, Antonio Landriano, who was murdered in 1499, just before Il Moro's flight to Germany. For the rest, Francesco's building operations were directed mainly towards the better defence of his dominions. To him both the Porta Romana and the Porta Vercellina in Milan owed their fortresses. The Castello of Cremona was strengthened by an outer circle of walls. Bridges were built over the Po at Piacenza and over the Adda at Lodi and Cassano, while the citadels of the chief subject-towns were either erected or improved under his auspices. Considering that Francesco only reigned sixteen years and that at least four of these were spent in establishing his hold upon the Duchy, the amount which he achieved in the sphere of architecture can only be described as extraordinary.

One other building in Milan must be mentioned here, for which Francesco was not directly responsible, but which, nevertheless, exercised an important influence upon the architecture of his day. This was the Medici Bank in the Via de' Bossi, which was decorated and practically rebuilt by Cosimo's orders as a sign of his appreciation of the gift. Although there seems little foundation for Vasari's assertion that Michelozzo was the architect employed, the decoration of the bank was obviously inspired by Florentine traditions. The Florentine, Filarete, who had been recommended to Francesco Sforza by the Medici, filled the pages of his *Trattato* with descriptions of its splendours. With its loggias and marble

doors, its vast halls and richly decorated ceilings after the style of the Medici Palace in Florence, the bank appeared to Filarete "more beautiful than anything in Milan". It is easy to understand that, at a time when Florence was regarded as the highest criterion in matters of art, the Medici Bank would serve as a model and an inspiration to many a rising architect at the Sforza Court. Cosimo's representative in his Milanese house was the Florentine, Pigello Portinari, whose name has lived on in Milan owing to the chapel which he founded in S. Eustorgio for the reception of the shrine of S. Peter Martyr. Here Portinari was himself buried in 1468. Sixteen years later, in 1484, Lorenzo dei Medici's financial difficulties obliged him to abandon the bank, of which all traces have now disappeared. The only remaining fresco, of those which once covered its walls, is that known as Gian Galeazzo Sforza reading Cicero, which has found its way into the Wallace Collection. Among the architectural fragments preserved in the Castello Museum, is the magnificent marble doorway containing portraits of Francesco and Bianca Sforza. This alone, in the wealth of its decoration and the delicacy of its carving, is sufficient indication of the former splendours of the Medici Bank.

Great as was the activity of Lodovico Il Moro in the sphere of architecture, he had inherited so vast a field in the monuments founded by his predecessors, that the buildings begun under his auspices form the least important part of his work. His chief function was to adorn and improve the foundations of his ancestors, notably the Castello of Milan and the Certosa of Pavia. Nevertheless, the Duomo of Pavia, the churches of S. Maria presso Celso and S. Satiro in Milan and the monasteries of S. Maria delle Grazie and S. Ambrogio were built during Il Moro's reign. About the year 1490 Lodovico resolved to erect a cathedral at Pavia upon the site of the ancient basilica which was rapidly becoming a ruin. Thereupon Leonardo da Vinci was sent thither with a Siennese architect to give advice as to the proposed building. His colleague did, apparently, furnish some plans for the cathedral, but Leonardo was too much absorbed in the laws of geometry

and mechanics which should govern its construction to produce any tangible result of his visit. Eventually the work was entrusted to a pupil of Bramante. Yet the architect's death, in 1497, occurred before the Duomo had attained to more than a "praiseworthy and magnificent beginning".¹ It was, thereupon, decided that Amadeo should be asked to supervise the building, to which arrangement Il Moro gave a somewhat grudging, consent, insisting that the architect should not go to the Duomo more than two or three times a month in order that the Certosa might not be neglected. Despite this stipulation Amadeo's appointment as architect of the Duomo in 1498 paved the way for his resignation of his post at the Certosa, and the Cathedral of Pavia was in large measure due to him. His hand can be traced in the fine *tiburio*, clearly inspired by the Certosa, and in the graceful loggia which runs round the interior of the cathedral. In 1498, however, the days of artistic activity were already numbered. Although Amadeo carried the work several stages nearer completion, the Duomo of Pavia took its place among the many unfinished monuments which bear witness to the abrupt close of Il Moro's reign.

During the era of Francesco and of Galeazzo, Milanese architecture had been infused with the ideals of Florence by means of such men as Filarete and Benedetto Ferini. Now, under Lodovico, the external influence came from a fresh quarter and Lombard architecture was guided into new channels by Bramante of Urbino. It has been truly said that "Bramante's is the great name of the second period of the Renaissance, as Brunelleschi's is of the first".² Bramante, indeed, created a revolution in Italian architecture which can only be compared with that effected by his Florentine predecessor, and the influence of both made itself felt in Milan. Yet, whereas Brunelleschi's ideals were only transmitted to Milan through his successors, Bramante settled in the Duchy when his art was still in process of development. Thus Milan became the stage upon which the later revolution was effected, her monuments were the models from which its

¹ Malaguzzi-Valeri, *Amadeo*.

² Blashfield and Hopkins, *Vasari's Lives*, vol. iii., p. 41.

originator drew his inspiration. It is now generally held that Bramante migrated to Lombardy as early as 1472-1474, and from the time that Lodovico became possessed of the reins of government, he was constantly employed in his service. About the year 1485, Bramante practically rebuilt the little church of S. Satiro in Milan, adding to it the fine baptistery which the goldsmith and sculptor, Caradosso, decorated with a terracotta frieze. Among the row of dancing children which forms the main design of the frieze, are medallions containing what are generally held to be the portraits of Bramante and Caradosso, the architect and sculptor who worked there together. A few years later, Bramante was working at Lodovico's favourite church and monastery of S. Maria delle Grazie. Originally founded by that Gaspare da Vimercate who had aided Francesco Sforza to enter Milan, the possession of a miracle-working Madonna had enabled the Dominicans to build the church upon a larger and more magnificent scale. Now, while it was still unfinished, Lodovico took the work under his patronage, and for the remainder of his reign he was engaged in schemes for its improvement. Apse, cloister and sacristy are all by Bramante's hand, and in 1497 he added the beautiful cupola which ranks among his finest work. S. Maria delle Grazie had become, in that year, doubly dear to Il Moro as the burial-place of his wife. A jewelled crucifix, illuminated missals and a complete set of altar plate, were among the gifts which Lodovico lavished upon the church. Il Gobbo was employed to execute Beatrice's tomb and to carve reliefs upon the high altar. Finally, the Duke ordered a congress of artists to be summoned in order to furnish designs for the façade, a work which the approaching invasion never allowed to be finished. Nevertheless, the Church of the Grazie remains one of the best examples of Renaissance work in Milan, and, moreover, the church which is most intimately associated with Lodovico Il Moro. Here, in truth, to quote from an inscription which is still preserved in the cloister, every stone proclaims him as Duke and Mecænas.¹ Bramante's last work in

¹ "Singulis horum penatium lapidibus ducem mecænatem clamantibus."

Milan was the Monastery of S. Ambrogio, which has now become a military hospital. In 1492 he was engaged upon the cloister with its marble columns and richly carved capitals. When he returned, after an interval of some years, to build the adjacent monastery, his numerous engagements prevented him from giving it his undivided attention. Other artists were employed upon the reliefs in the place of "Maestro Bramante, occupied with other work," until at length the fall of Il Moro brought with it the total suspension of the building. Bramante left Milan to embark upon a career of still greater triumph in Rome and to win for himself eternal fame as the original architect of S. Peter's.

The subject of the present chapter has so far been confined to the architecture of Milan and Pavia. Yet, while these cities provided the Sforza Dukes with their chief sphere of activity, the other towns of the Duchy were by no means neglected. "He who is master of Milan has the whole Duchy at his mercy" wrote that astute observer Philippe de Commynes, and his remark is no less applicable to architecture than it is to matters of government. Foreign architects, attached to the Court of Milan, passed from thence to execute commissions in the subject-towns. Local craftsmen were employed in the great building works of the capital, and carried back with them to their native town the ideas which they had imbibed there. Typical of what took place in many parts of the Duchy, is the influence exercised by Amadeo over the architecture of Cremona. Asked by the monks of S. Lorenzo to design a tomb for the martyrs S. Mario and S. Marta, Amadeo came to Cremona about 1482. The bas-reliefs which he executed have since been transferred to a pulpit in the Duomo, and it is easy to trace the connection between these and the work of Pietro da Rhò, an architect who was much employed in Cremona at the time. Pietro da Rhò is probably responsible for the door of the Stanga Palace now in the Louvre, of which the rich carving, full of movement and of animation, shows a close affinity with Amadeo's work. Among the architects who studied at the Certosa were the brothers Giacomo and Tommaso Rodari of Como. They returned to make extensive

alterations in their own cathedral and to decorate the whole building, aided in their task by Amadeo's encouragement and advice. Later on, Bramante furnished designs for the new façade and portal which were added to the Cathedral of Como about the year 1491.

Much of the building in the subject-towns was executed at the orders of the Sforza Dukes and by architects in their service. The fortresses at Vigevano and Cusago both belong to the Sforza era, and the resemblance between their principal towers and the Torre di Filarete in Milan point to their having been imitated from the work of the Florentine architect, if they were not actually built by him. The Castello of Soncino was built by Ferini during the latter part of Galeazzo's reign, and, a few years later, Guinforte Solari was employed upon the fortresses at Gaillate and Novara. Under Lodovico, building went on in the subject-towns on a still more extensive scale. In 1488 Bramante's pupil, Dolcebuono, began the Church of the Incoronata at Lodi, which was afterwards decorated by Amadeo. Bramante built a church at Abbiategrasso, while the ducal villa was enlarged and improved by him at Il Moro's command. The palace at Vigevano, which formed one of Lodovico's favourite resorts, was also Bramante's work, and it is probable that he assisted the Duke in his numerous schemes for the improvement of his native town. Thus the architectural revival of the Sforza period spread throughout the Duchy. Thanks mainly to the activity of the Dukes of Milan and to the new influences which they brought to bear upon the native schools in their dominions, a style of architecture arose which was distinctively Lombard in character. The richly decorated terra-cotta buildings of Lombardy had their own place, and that by no means an unimportant one, in the Italian Renaissance.

CHAPTER XII

ART

NOT least among the many reasons which favoured a despotism rather than a Republic in Italy were the superior qualifications of the despot for acting as a patron of art. A Republic would employ the local artists for the decoration of public buildings, and this, with the commissions of private families and of religious communities, created a constant demand for artistic work. A prince, however, could do more than give commissions. He was in a position to pay not only for results but for experiments in the sphere of art. His Court could be made the centre of attraction for all the rising artists of the day.

Of these princely patrons few can rank above the Sforza Dukes. Under them Milan became the fountain-head of Lombard art, whither the painters of the subject-towns came for inspiration and employment. They exercised, moreover, that wider patronage which extended beyond the limits of the State. Their Court was held throughout Italy to offer the widest scope for artistic genius. Typical of the part played by ducal patronage is the fact that the two most powerful influences in Milanese art came from beyond the borders of the Duchy, and that Milan became the home of their adoption owing to the two chief Sforza Dukes. Vincenzo Foppa was a Brescian by birth, and he had already received his artistic training in the schools of Verona and Venice, before he settled at Pavia, about the year 1456, and came under the notice of Francesco Sforza. The school which Foppa founded reigned supreme in Milan until some twenty-five years later, when "Leonardo the Florentine" offered his services to Lodovico Il Moro, and in so doing created a revolution in Lombard art.

When Francesco Sforza became Duke of Milan the Lombard school of painting was still in its infancy. Owing to the long period of unrest which followed upon the death of Gian Galeazzo Visconti, there had been little progress in the history of art since the beginning of the century. In 1450, as in 1402, the painter found the field of artistic activity practically monopolised by his forerunners, the architect and the sculptor. Very soon, however, Francesco began to seek out painters to decorate the walls of his principal dwelling-places, and in so doing he came in contact with Foppa. Little trace or record remains of Foppa's early work in Milan, but it is probable that he was one of the artists employed at the Castello of Pavia in 1456, and at the Court of Arengo in Milan some three years later. From henceforth his relations with Francesco Sforza appear to have been close and constant. When, in 1461, Foppa went to Genoa he took with him a glowing letter of recommendation from his patron. Such praise, wrote the Duke, was demanded both by "his skill in painting and his faith and devotion towards ourselves".¹ As the result of this visit Foppa established a connection with Genoa which lasted for many years. He was employed at different times by members of the Spinola and Doria families, and in 1490 he was commissioned by Giuliano della Rovere to paint an altarpiece for the Cathedral of Savona. By such means as these did the ducal patrons of art extend their influence through all parts of their dominions.

In 1462 Foppa was back at Pavia, and he was constantly employed by Duke Francesco during the remainder of his reign. Among his most important works was the decoration of the Medici Bank with frescoes, including a series of episodes in the life of Trajan, portraits of Francesco Sforza, his wife and children, and various other subjects. At the Medici Bank Foppa naturally came in contact with the Florentine Governor, Pigello Portinari, for whom he is held to have executed the frescoes which may still be seen in the Portinari Chapel at S. Eustorgio. During the last years of Francesco's reign Foppa

¹Cf. Caffi, M., *Di alcuni maestri di arte nel secolo xv in Milano*, p. 101. Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1878.

was at work in the Ospedale Maggiore and in the cloisters of the Certosa, nor did the death of his great patron cause any cessation in his activity. Galeazzo Maria at once took him into his service, and in 1468 the Duke wrote to recommend Foppa as a suitable person to be made a citizen of Pavia. Some years later, when Galeazzo wished to find an artist worthy of furnishing the altar-piece for the chapel in the Castello of Pavia, he was advised by Bartolomeo Gadio to consult "Magistro Vincenzo" as all painters would not be equal to the task. Gadio was not a person to be easily satisfied, as has been seen in his dealings with the architects of the day. Hence his confidence in Foppa is no small testimony to the painter's merits and to the high position which he held among his contemporaries. For a short time Foppa enjoyed the patronage of Il Moro, and as late as 1485 he was painting in Milan at the Church of S. Maria del Brera. In 1489, however, the artist petitioned the Council of Brescia for leave to return to his native city, where the remainder of his life was spent. In the new era which had dawned under the auspices of Leonardo da Vinci the atmosphere of Milan had doubtless ceased to be congenial to one who was wedded to the traditions of the Lombard school, and who had for long been regarded as its chief representative.¹

Time has dealt hardly with the fruits of Foppa's long years of labour. Of all the frescoes which once adorned the Medici Bank, the Court of Arengo, the Certosa and Castello of Pavia no trace remains, and such of his work as has escaped destruction is now scattered through the picture galleries of Europe. Nevertheless, enough survives to justify the renown which Foppa won in his own day, and perhaps also to show that his art possessed features which would naturally appeal to Francesco Sforza. Somewhat conventional in treatment and lavish in his use of gold paint, Foppa clung to the early traditions of Italian art. Yet the lack of grace in his squarely built figures with their large feet is more than compensated for by his "correct and masterly outline" and by the feeling of

¹ Cf. Ffoulkes, C. J., *Foppa* (Bryan's *Dictionary of Painters*, vol. ii., ed. 1903).

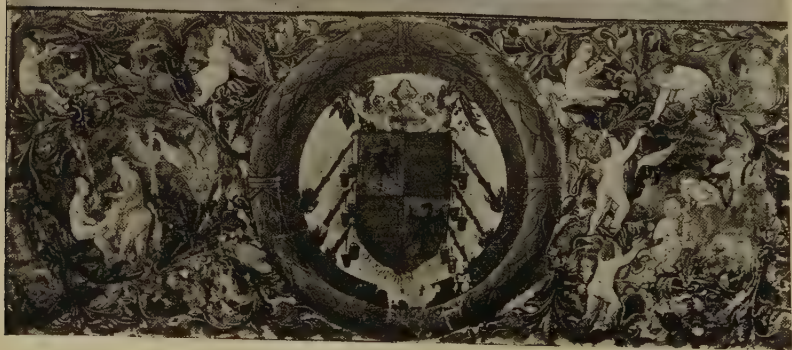
power and energy which pervades his work. Such an artist would have much in common with the first Sforza Duke. In the eyes of both prince and artist, the one the founder of a dynasty, the other the founder of a school of painting, elegance and even beauty must needs yield the first place to strength. Francesco, moreover, was soldier enough to have a wholesome respect for the conventional, and to look askance at any departure from the beaten track in the sphere of art. Even in such minor matters as a fondness for architectural backgrounds and for effects of perspective, Foppa's tastes may well have been shared by the Duke who "never ceased to build".

Foppa had no immediate contemporary in Milan whose talents were in any way equal to his own. There were, however, a host of minor artists in the ducal service whose time was for the most part occupied with such humble commissions as the decoration of banners, marriage chests and the bards worn by horses. In 1455, for example, Francesco wrote to the Podestà of Cremona recommending him to employ a certain "Giovanni da Milano detto Pavese" to repaint the ducal arms upon a tower of the city, "in order that the viper (*biscia*) may be as magnificent and beautiful as it ever was, for the glory and honour of our city".¹ Some five or six members of the family of Zenone da Vaprio were employed upon similar tasks by Francesco and his son. Chief of these was Constantino, who in 1468 produced "eight chests and a basket at twelve ducats" in honour of Duchess Bona's arrival in Milan.² Such men were in the position of artisans rather than of artists. They carried out the instructions of their employer, which often went into the minutest details. Costly colours, such as ultramarine and gold, would not be used unless expressly ordered and paid for by the patron. Yet painting as a trade proved a valuable training for painting as an art, and craftsmen such as Constantino da Vaprio and Cristoforo Moretto, passed from providing bards for the Duke's horses to covering the walls of his palaces with frescoes.

Another branch of art which was largely developed by

¹ Malaguzzi-Valeri, *Pittori Lombardi del Quattrocento*. Milan, 1902.

² *Op. cit.*



GALEAZZO MARIA SFORZA PRAYING FOR VICTORY

ILLUMINATION BY CRISTOFORO DE PREDIS

Wallace Collection

ducal patronage was that of portrait painting. At a time when an interchange of portraits was the necessary accompaniment of a marriage contract, and when it was the custom to paint the portraits even of the more important criminals, the art had a semi-political value. Political motives appear occasionally to have influenced Francesco Sforza in his choice of painters, as Bonifazio Bembo, of Cremona, when seeking employment from the Duke, made special mention of his services "for the preservation of this city for your Highness"¹ when it was besieged by the armies of Visconti in 1447. Bembo became one of the leading artists in the service of the two first Sforza Dukes, and in 1462 he was employed upon the fresco portraits of Francesco and his wife, which are still to be seen in the Church of S. Agostino at Cremona. Despite their damaged condition, the two kneeling figures retain a peculiar interest as Bembo's only surviving authentic work, and as two of the few really contemporary portraits of Francesco Sforza and Bianca Maria Visconti. Another portrait-painter greatly favoured by the House of Sforza was Zanetto Bugatto. In 1460 he was sent by the Duke and Duchess to study art in Brussels under Roger van der Weyden, and, three years later, Bianca herself wrote to thank that famous master for the pains which he had bestowed upon her protégé. This same Bugatto was sent to France in 1468 to paint the portrait of Bona of Savoy for her future husband. On "Messer Zanetto's" return, Galeazzo Maria was so much pleased with the picture that he wrote to his mother begging her to excuse him from sending it to her, as he could not bring himself to part with it. Besides this artist, who in Galeazzo's opinion "worked from the life with singular perfection,"² the Duke also employed Cristoforo de Predis, father of the more famous Ambrogio. The interesting illumination in the Wallace Collection, representing Galeazzo Maria praying for victory, is by Cristoforo's hand, although it is hard to tell what event in Galeazzo's somewhat inglorious military career it was intended to commemorate.

Widespread artistic activity and the influence of a powerful and original artist are together sufficient to produce a distinctive school of painting. Thus the two first Sforza Dukes

¹ Caffi, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

² Malaguzzi-Valeri, *Pittori Lombardi*.

through their patronage of Foppa and through the incentive which they gave to the local arts, played no small part in the development of the Lombard school. Their influence bore fruit in the work of such men as Borgognone and Bramantino, Zenale and Buttinone, whose style was already formed before the arrival of Leonardo, and who, whether or no, they succumbed in individual cases to Leonardo's influence, stand out as the representatives of an independent and earlier tradition.

The name of Ambrogio Stefano da Fossano, better known as Borgognone, first appears in the "Matricola dell' Università dei pittori di Milano" in the year 1481. From then until his death in 1523 Borgognone painted steadily in Milan and Pavia, never apparently going further afield than Bergamo, and unaffected by the political crises which took place around him. Borgognone's connection with the Certosa, and his untiring industry as a painter, have rendered his works familiar to many who know little of his contemporaries save their names. There is, however, no better representative of Lombard art in the pre-Leonardesque era. Although sombre in colouring and somewhat solid in their proportions, Borgognone's pale-faced Madonnas have their peculiar charm. Refined sentiment, power of expression, and, above all, a true spirit of devotion are never absent from his work. Despite the traces of Leonardo's influence which can be discerned in his later pictures, Borgognone remained until the last "the incarnation of the early Milanese spirit in art".¹ If this spirit breathes in the picture of the two S. Catherines, which hangs in the National Gallery, it breathes no less in the magnificent fresco of the Coronation of the Virgin in the Church of S. Simpliciano at Milan. The sense of dignity and mysticism which pervades the earlier work is, if anything, intensified by the more realistic treatment of the later period.

Among the other painters of the pre-Leonardesque school, Bartolomeo Suardi, or Bramantino, is distinguished by his close association with the great architect and painter Bramante. Bramantino began his artistic career as the pupil of Foppa, and as late as the year 1526 he was acting as engineer-in-chief to

¹ Bryan's *Dictionary*, vol. v., "Stefano".



LODOVICO SFORZA, BEATRICE D'ESTE AND THEIR SONS KNEELING
BEFORE THE VIRGIN

ALTAR-PIECE BY ARTIST OF THE LOMBARD SCHOOL

Pinacoteca del Brera, Milan

Francesco Sforza II. Thus he serves as a connecting-link between the various phases in the artistic history of the Sforza era. Educated in the old Lombard tradition, he was profoundly influenced by the great revival of Il Moro's reign. Finally, when the golden age was over, and when Leonardo and Bramante had departed, he lived to hand on the traditions of his youth to Luini and Gaudenzio Ferrari. For the rest, these masters of the old Lombard school do not stand out very clearly from each other, and the task of distinguishing them is one which may well be left to the art critic. All show the same characteristics in a more or less degree. Amber and grey are their favourite colours, S. Catherine of Alexandria is their favourite saint. Their style is severe and lacking in movement, yet it is highly finished, restrained and dignified. Nothing could be further removed from the glowing vitality of Leonardo's art. Yet owing to the common meeting ground afforded by Il Moro's Court, Lombard painting of the future arose out of a fusion of these two styles. It is a curious coincidence that the process of transition is nowhere better illustrated than in the well-known altar-piece in the Brera containing portraits of Lodovico, Beatrice, and their sons. In the centre of the picture the Virgin sits enthroned with the Child upon her lap, while behind her stand the four Fathers of the Church. S. Ambrose, the patron saint of Milan, has his hand upon Lodovico's shoulder as if in the act of presenting him to the Virgin. The little Count of Pavia kneels at his father's side, while opposite to them are the kneeling figures of Beatrice and the baby Francesco, who is still in swaddling clothes. Painted in the year 1495, the picture stands, both historically and artistically, at the parting of the ways. From the former point of view, it represents the House of Sforza at the very apex of its prosperity. From the latter, it shows the old Lombard style stirred, as it were, by a breath of Renaissance air. Although the figures are still of the heavy Lombard type they no longer lack movement. Leonardo's grace and sweetness have yet to come, but the lesson of animation has already been learned.

With the supremacy of Lodovico Il Moro a new chapter began in the history of Lombard art. His love of splendour,

his ambition, and above all, his refined artistic sense, quick to discern real merit, combined to make him an ideal patron. "In dealing with artists his judgment is absolutely unerring,"¹ says a writer who is by no means inclined to favour Il Moro. Hence nothing would satisfy him short of the best. For this, where should he turn but to the artistic circles of Florence and to that renowned patron of the arts, his friend and contemporary, Lorenzo dei Medici?

Precisely when and how Leonardo da Vinci came to Milan is a matter of some uncertainty. The anonymous writer of his life relates that the artist was sent at the age of thirty by Lorenzo dei Medici to convey a lyre to the Duke of Milan. This and other considerations point towards the end of 1481 as the most probable date of Leonardo's arrival in Lombardy. Il Moro may, however, have been the first to move in the matter, as Leonardo speaks of himself as "the man whom my lord the Duke summoned from Florence to carry out his work". The remarkable letter, in which Leonardo offered his services to Lodovico and in which he so confidently proclaimed his powers as a military and hydraulic engineer, as architect, sculptor and painter, was probably written after his arrival in Milan, when the outbreak of the War of Ferrara would render his military talents especially valuable to the Government. In the concluding words of the document Leonardo declared himself able "to undertake the work of the horse, that will be to the immortal glory and eternal honour of my lord your father, of happy memory and of the illustrious House of Sforza".² This refers to the equestrian statue of Duke Francesco, which formed Leonardo's chief work during the first years of his stay in Milan. The idea of such a statue had originated under Galeazzo Maria, but hitherto all attempts to carry it into execution had failed. Now Il Moro had set his heart upon something quite unique, and it seemed doubtful whether even Leonardo would be able to cope with the task. The difficulty of casting a model in

¹ Müntz, E., *Leonardo da Vinci*, vol. i., p. 102. London: Heinemann, 1898.

² From the *Codice Atlantico*. Cf. Horne, H. P., *Leonardo da Vinci*. Artists' Library, 1903.

bronze upon so large a scale appears to have made Leonardo abandon his first effort. In 1493, however, a second model was completed and was placed under a triumphal arch in the Piazza of the Castello on the occasion of Bianca Maria's marriage. All were loud in praise of the magnificent statue. "*Guarde pur come è bello quel cavallo*," sang Baldassare Taccone in his poem written to celebrate the wedding. Milan, according to Lancino Curzio's epigram, looked eagerly forward to the great day when the bronze would flow into the clay and all with one voice would extol the completed statue as a thing divine.¹ This day never came. The descent of the French upon Italy strained the resources of Milan to the uttermost limit, and the expense of casting Leonardo's model was too great to be incurred. "I will not speak of the horse," Leonardo wrote sadly to his patron, "for I know the times." As late as 1501 the model was in existence, but from that time all record of it ceases. Tradition relates that Leonardo's masterpiece in sculpture, the result of long years of thought and labour, met its end as a target for Gascon archers.

Leonardo was still at work upon the equestrian statue when he began to paint his "Last Supper" in the Refectory of S. Maria delle Grazie. Thus to Il Moro belongs the lasting honour of having commissioned from the greatest genius of the age his masterpiece both in painting and in sculpture. Many are the stories connected with Leonardo's work upon the "Cenacolo". Bandello describes in his *Novelle* how the artist would sometimes paint from sunrise to dusk without so much as pausing to eat or drink. Then, for several days, he would not put a touch to the picture, although he would spend an hour or two each day in contemplating and criticising it. It was during these hours of silent scrutiny, Leonardo once informed Lodovico, that he achieved the most. Sometimes an idea would come to him while he was working at the statue, and Leonardo would hurry through the midday sun to S. Maria delle Grazie, paint two or three strokes and then depart. Bandello also tells how Matthias Lang, Cardinal of Gurk, once

¹ "Expectant animi, molemque futuram
Suspiciunt; fluat aes; vox erit: Ecce deus!"

visited the Convent and questioned Leonardo as to the amount of his salary. He expressed great surprise on learning that the artist received 2,000 ducats besides the liberal presents which the Duke gave him from time to time. This was met, on Leonardo's part, by equal indignation at the Cardinal's failure to appreciate what was due to the high calling of art. As time went on even the Duke began to grow impatient, and in a paper of directions to Marchesino Stanga, dated 30th June, 1497,¹ he bade him "ask Leonardo the Florentine to finish his work on the wall of the Refectory, and to begin the painting on the other wall of the Refectory". This last item refers to the portraits of Lodovico and Beatrice, of which traces may still be seen opposite to the Cenacolo. When at last the work was accomplished it amply justified all delay. Even the crumbling ruin that remains to-day is enough to show the immense superiority of Leonardo's Cenacolo over all other treatments of the subject. The picture has been described as portraying "the effect of a word upon a group of men"² of various ages and temperaments. Fear, grief, astonishment, love, all find their expression among the Apostles when they learn that "one of you shall betray Me". It is, indeed, the supreme example of Leonardo's own maxim: "That figure is most to be praised which best expresses by its gesture the passions of the soul". Fate has dealt almost as hardly with the Cenacolo as with the equestrian statue. Louis XII.'s threatened attempt to convey wall and picture bodily to France was mercifully averted. Yet when Antonio de Beatis visited Milan in 1517, he wrote in his diary that the picture was already beginning to spoil, "whether from the damp of the wall or from some other accident I do not know".³ From that day to this the process of decay has gone on, a standing witness to the ill-fortune which attended the dearest enterprises of both artist and patron.

Among other commissions given by Il Moro to Leonardo were portraits of the Duke's two mistresses, Cecilia Gallerani

¹ Cf. Cantù, *Arch. Stor. Lomb.*, 1874, p. 184.

² Gronau, *Leonardo*, p. 119. London: Duckworth, 1902.

³ *Die Reise des Kardinals Luigi d'Avogona*.

and Lucrezia Crivelli, a picture for Matthias Corvinus of Hungary, and "an altar-piece containing a Nativity which was sent by the Duke to the Emperor".¹ None of these pictures have been satisfactorily identified, but it has been suggested that the altar-piece sent to Maximilian may have been the "Virgin of the Rocks" now in the Louvre. Leonardo originally undertook to paint this picture for the Church of S. Francesco in Milan, but some quarrel arose as to its price, and the matter was referred to the Duke. It seems that the monks of the Confraternity refused to pay the sum which Leonardo asked and he therefore reclaimed his picture, while Ambrogio de Predis, who was already engaged upon the wings of the altar-piece, executed a replica of Leonardo's original for the Confraternity. The replica with the two side-panels remained at S. Francesco until they were brought to England and eventually to the National Gallery. According to this new suggestion, the original must have been bought by Il Moro and sent to Maximilian at the time of his marriage with Bianca Maria, whence it passed at some later date into the French Royal Collection.²

Painting pictures formed, however, but one branch of Leonardo's manifold activities in Il Moro's service. He decorated the rooms of the Castello, he organised State pageants. His treatise on painting was written in Milan at Lodovico's request. He acted as the Duke's adviser on questions ranging from the designs suggested for the *tiburio* of the Cathedral to the most approved methods of irrigation. Thus the years which Leonardo spent in Milan were among the most fruitful in his career. Nowhere did his genius find so congenial an atmosphere or so wide a scope as at the Court which Isabella d'Este named "the school of the master of those who know". Surrounded by admirers who were ready to take his work on trust, he had greater opportunity for making experiments than among the critical Florentines. His high conception of art prompted him to devote a great part of his time to its scientific and theoretical aspects, and in Lodovico Il Moro he found a patron who possessed the patience and the discernment to

¹ Vasari.

² Horne, *Leonardo da Vinci*, p. 22.

allow him to work in his own way. On the other hand, Leonardo was peculiarly suited to Il Moro. Although naturally unwarlike, Lodovico knew that the military aspect of the State could not be neglected, and thus he recognised the value of a man who could invent "various and infinite means of offence and defence". So, too, Leonardo's knowledge of engineering was of great advantage to Lodovico in his plans for the material improvement of his dominions. Above all, Leonardo was a man of genius, and Il Moro had that in him which could appreciate the height of his aims. He realised that Leonardo sought, in all he did, the supreme point where art and science join, where beauty becomes but the outward expression of truth.

One more point of resemblance existed between Leonardo and Lodovico. Both artist and patron were in advance of their age, or, as Machiavelli would have it, they were unsuited to the times in which they lived. At a less unsettled period Lodovico would have been a more successful ruler and Leonardo would probably have been a more productive artist. The French invasions were perhaps the greatest misfortunes in both their lives. Although Leonardo lived to be honoured by two French kings, to travel in the Marches with Cæsar Borgia and to win further triumphs as a painter, the twenty years of wandering which followed Il Moro's fall could not but be disastrous to his art. "The Duke lost State, possessions and liberty and no work was completed for him," forms Leonardo's epitaph on his own career no less than on that of his great patron.

Some mention must be made of Leonardo's subsequent connection with Milan. In 1506 he was summoned thither by Charles d'Amboise, whose admiration for his works made him eager to know the artist personally. After staying for some time in the Lieutenant's house Leonardo was commanded to await the arrival of Louis XII., who wished to employ him "for certain little pictures of Our Lady," and possibly for his own portrait. Except for a short visit to Florence, Leonardo seems to have remained in Milan until 1512. Yet even Louis XII.'s entreaties could not induce him to renounce the man of

science for the artist, and the years were chiefly spent in research and experiment. Once again Leonardo visited Milan in the company of Francis I. This was in the winter of 1515-1516, shortly before the artist left Italy never to return.

Much time has been expended in the attempt to prove that Leonardo founded an Academy of Arts and Sciences in Milan. Yet not only is there no conclusive evidence of such an Academy, but its existence seems to accord ill with Leonardo's somewhat erratic habits and with his dislike of being bound by restrictions or formalities of any kind. Even the pupils whom he gathered round him were rather friends and companions than professional apprentices. They included, on the one hand, Milanese nobles, such as Boltraffio and Melzi, and on the other hand, the graceful boy, Salai, who entered Leonardo's household as a servant, and to whom the master, charmed by his beauty, taught his own art. Nor was Leonardo's influence confined to his direct pupils. It has been said, indeed, that to paint in Milan during the early years of the sixteenth century was to paint in Leonardo's style. Many of his pupils and followers hardly exist apart from their great master. The pictures of Marco d'Oggiono, Gianpetrino, Cesare da Sesto, to take but a few examples, seem merely to represent certain aspects of Leonardo's art in an exaggerated form. To others, however, Leonardo's influence came as a phase in their career, aiding but not wholly controlling the formation of their style. Among these must be reckoned Giovanni Antonio Bazzi (Sodoma), Andrea Solari, Bernardino Luini and Gaudenzio Ferrari. All four subjects of the House of Sforza by birth, the first left Milan when he was still young to mingle his Lombard ideals with those of Siena and Florence. The other three remained in the Duchy to keep the fires of art alive through years of warfare and of foreign domination.

Next to Leonardo, the painter, who had the closest relations with Il Moro's Court, was perhaps Ambrogio de Predis. From the year 1482 he held the official post of portrait-painter to the reigning House, and thus, despite his debt to Leonardo, he ranks rather as a contemporary than as a pupil. Most critics now agree in assigning to Ambrogio de Predis the

beautiful portrait of a lady in the Ambrosiana Library, which was for long known as Beatrice d'Este by Leonardo. There is little doubt that the portrait represents Bianca Sforza, Il Moro's illegitimate daughter, whose death in November, 1496, cast the first shadow over her father's prosperity. The companion portrait may well be that of her husband, Galeazzo San Severino. In 1493 Ambrogio de Predis went to Germany in the train of Bianca Maria Sforza in order to paint her portrait and that of her affianced husband, Maximilian. Hence some confusion arose over the two Bianca Sforza, which was only dissipated by the discovery of genuine portraits of the Empress in Paris and Berlin. The connections which Ambrogio de Predis formed during this visit stood him in good stead. In 1502 the painter crossed the Alps for the second time in order to settle permanently at Innsbruck among the band of Sforza exiles gathered at Maximilian's Court. Another popular portrait-painter of the day was Leonardo's pupil, Boltraffio. Although working more as an amateur than as a professional, he was employed by many of his fellow-nobles at the Court of Milan, and the fine portrait of Lodovico Il Moro in the Trivulzio collection is by his hand.

During the first French occupation Andrea Solari held a position closely resembling that of Court portrait-painter. The younger brother of Cristoforo Il Gobbo, he came of an artistic Milanese family who had done great things in the service of the Sforza Dukes. Andrea himself received his education first in the old Lombard school and then in Venice, from whence he returned in 1493 to fall beneath the spell of Leonardo. The combined effect of these influences showed itself in highly finished and finely modelled portraits, often enriched by charming landscape backgrounds. After the fall of Il Moro, Solari came under the notice of Charles and Georges d'Amboise, who became his most constant patrons. Charles d'Amboise is probably represented in Solari's portrait of a man, in the Louvre, with a view of the Alps as seen from Milan in the background. The Cardinal, after failing to secure Leonardo's services, took Solari to France, where he decorated the Chapel of Château Gaillon. Portraits of Cæsar Borgia, Girolamo Morone and



Mansell

BIANCA, DAUGHTER OF LODOVICO SFORZA

PORTRAIT BY AMBROGIO DE PREDIS

Biblioteca Ambrosiana. Milan

Massimiliano Sforza are also attributed to Solari, who lived in Milan long enough to see both the sons of Il Moro upon the ducal throne.

While the artistic influences of the Sforza Court spread across the Alps by means of such men as Solari and De Predis, they were also felt through the length and breadth of the Duchy. No school of painting, for example, was more local than that of Lodi, where successive generations of the Piazza family reigned supreme. Yet Bertino Piazza assisted in the decoration of the Court of Arengo for Francesco Sforza, while his sons were among the vast concourse of artists from all the subject-towns who came at Lodovico's orders to decorate the ballroom of the Castello on the occasion of his wedding. Such visits brought the local craftsmen into touch with the general world of art, and they seldom failed to leave traces upon their work. In other instances the connecting link was supplied by means of foreign artists, who were recommended to the subject-towns by the Sforza Dukes. Lodovico Il Moro wished at one time to employ some fresh artist in the decoration of the Castello, and on writing to Florence to ask who would be fitted for such a task, the name of Perugino was among those submitted to him. The attempt to bring Perugino to the Castello proved unsuccessful, but through Lodovico's recommendation his services were secured both for the Certosa and for the Church of S. Agostino in Cremona. While working in Cremona, Perugino exercised a profound influence over the native artist Boccacio Boccaccino, who formed the leading representative of the local school, and whose traditions lived on in his pupils through the greater part of the sixteenth century.

During the last thirty years of the Sforza era, art flourished chiefly among the local schools, and among painters whose work lay in quiet towns remote from the distracted capital. The most prominent artists of the day were Luini and Gaudenzio Ferrari, two natives of Northern Lombardy, of the district of lakes and of mountain valleys. Both had been trained in Milan in the days of its splendour. Both drew their inspiration in the first instance from Borgognone and Bramantino, and later from Leonardo. Yet Luini executed his best frescoes, "as he was

required, and for sufficient daily bread,"¹ in the churches of Saronno, Como and Lugano, while Gaudenzio's masterpieces must be sought at Varallo and Vercelli in his own Valsesia. As the charm of Luini's clear colouring and sweetness of expression reached its full perfection, his work became greatly in vogue throughout the Duchy. He was employed at the Certosa, by the Confraternity of the Holy Crown and by various private families in Milan. Among the most interesting of recent discoveries is the series of frescoes, containing no less than fourteen Sforza portraits, painted for the Della Tela family, and now generally ascribed to Luini.² They are held to date from the years 1521-25, when Luini was most active in Milan, and when, too, the fortunes of the House of Sforza had experienced a temporary revival. Thus the portrait of Francesco II., a man of about thirty, with delicate features, keen eyes, and a short dark beard, must be contemporary, while for the others Luini probably had recourse to medals, aided in many cases by his own memory. For Muzio Attendolo, the founder of the House of Sforza, Luini could only paint a typical *condottiere*, while the name of Beatrice d'Este is given to the artist's idea of a beautiful woman. On the other hand, Massimiliano's receding chin and vacant expression, or the tightly compressed lips of the crafty Cardinal Ascanio, may well have been seen and remembered by Luini. About the same period Luini was employed in the Church of S. Maurizio at Milan by Alessandro Bentivoglio, the son of the exiled ruler of Bologna. In the lunettes upon either side of the high altar are kneeling figures representing Bentivoglio and his wife, Ippolita Sforza, each surrounded by three attendant saints.

Gaudenzio Ferrari's connection with the historic events of his day was even slighter than that of Luini, and such as it was, it came through the enemies of the House of Sforza. When after the battle of Marignano Francis I. held his Court at Pavia, and tried for a brief moment to revive the golden age of Il Moro, Gaudenzio was among the artists who were summoned thither. Some years later Gaudenzio was working on

¹ Ruskin, *Queen of the Air*.

² Beltrami, L., *La Serie atellana degli Sforza*. *Rassegna d'Arte*, 1903.

the Sacro Monte at Varallo when the French and imperial armies were skirmishing in the neighbourhood. Hence the German and Hungarian soldiers, whom he saw among Charles V.'s troops, were reproduced in his frescoes, and with them a noble with a fleur-de-lys garter, who may be intended to represent Bourbon. Gaudenzio Ferrari was a far more original painter than Luini. He showed great dramatic power, and his faults were all in the direction of exaggeration. Luini's charm, on the other hand, lay in harmonious colouring and in the loveliness of individual figures, while the effect of his work as a whole was often spoiled by want of unity and small power of imagination. Both perhaps suffered from the absence of fellow-artists, who could criticise and inspire their work, from being, in short, the last survivals of a great age. Gaudenzio Ferrari, at any rate, outlived both the Sforza dynasty and all that was best in Lombard art. During the last years of his life (1536-46), when Gaudenzio had settled in Milan, as the acknowledged head of the Lombard school, Francesco Sforza was dead, and France and Spain were haggling over the Duchy. His pupils and followers in the local school of Vercelli painted on in his style throughout the century, but no master arose to breathe fresh life into their work. In Milan, as in other Italian States, art and independence passed out of existence together.

CHAPTER XIII

LITERATURE AND SOCIAL LIFE

LITERATURE

THE literature of the Sforza period is not, in itself, of first-class importance. In spite of great literary activity and of wide appreciation of learning in all its branches, Milan produced no man-of-letters who could lay claim to genius, no humanist of the first order, no poet who possessed higher qualities than those of grace and charm. When Francesco Sforza began his reign, humanism, in the vigour of its youth, had permeated every phase of Italian society. The scholar who could apply his facility in Latin prose composition to the production of diplomatic documents met with an eager welcome at the chief Italian Courts. The art of polite letter-writing took Cicero for its model. Knowledge of Greek and the possession of Greek manuscripts were, in themselves, titles to fame. In this general enthusiasm for the classics Milan had her full share, yet her own contribution to learning was small. Of the humanists who frequented the Sforza Court Francesco Filelfo by far surpassed his companions. Filelfo, however, was not Milanese by birth, nor was Milan exclusively the city of his adoption. After visiting almost all the Courts of Italy, he eventually made Milan his headquarters, attracted thither by a high salary and by the absence of rivals who could deprive him of the monopoly of renown. Again, when during the reign of Lodovico Italian poetry burst into fresh life, it was Bernardo Bellincione, a minor poet of Florence, who became the pioneer of native poetry in Milan. Thus, from the standpoint of literature, Milan under the House of Sforza is chiefly interesting as a type of the country and of the age.

Her Dukes and Duchesses, who were themselves no mean scholars; her secretaries of State, whose very office demanded that they should be intelligent patrons of learning; her Court, where literary disputations were a recognised form of entertainment—all alike stamped Milan with the hall-mark of Renaissance Italy.

In the sphere of letters the era of the Visconti had been by no means barren of result. The University of Pavia, in 1450, already held a high place among centres of learning both on account of its magnificent library, founded under Petrarch's auspices, and through the special prominence which it gave to the study of law. Owing to the great reputation which the University had acquired in this last respect, there were few Italian lawyers of note who did not visit Pavia at some stage in their career. The pre-eminently legal traditions of the University had, however, prevented the rapid growth of humanism within its precincts. While the chief posts of honour and the highest rewards were reserved for lawyers, the humanist could only aspire to the Chair of Rhetoric, which was occupied at the time of Francesco Sforza's accession by Lorenzo Valla with the modest income of fifty ducats. The small part played by the University in the humanistic movement was counter-balanced by the influence of the Court. Filippo Maria Visconti liked to act as a patron of learning, and while his favourite hobby was the study of medicine, he also gathered round him a considerable number of humanists. Gasparino and Guinforte Barzizza succeeded each other in the office of ducal orator and letter-writer. Pier Candido Decembrio acted as Filippo Maria's secretary. The offer of a salary of 700 ducats succeeded in bringing Filelfo to the Court of Milan.

Policy and taste alike prompted the Sforza Dukes to carry on the work of their predecessors in the sphere of letters. Within a few years of his accession, Francesco Sforza had won to his side all the chief humanists who had been in the service of Visconti at the time of his death, and this, notwithstanding the part played by two of their number as champions of the Ambrosian Republic. Both Francesco Filelfo and Pier Can-

dido Decembrio were drawn into the political conflict which raged round Milan during the years 1447-50. Filelfo wielded his pen in the Republican cause, receiving a handsome salary from the Government as the price of his support. According to some authorities, Decembrio was one of the Captains and Defenders of the Republic, and he certainly acted as its secretary. In this capacity he negotiated with Æneas Sylvius for the cession of Milan to the Emperor, and he was active in soliciting the aid of other Powers against the enemies of the city-state. Yet, even though Filelfo and Decembrio ranked among its supporters, humanism can hardly be regarded as a factor in the Republican movement in Milan. The readiness with which both scholars made their peace with the new dynasty goes far to prove that their championship of the Ambrosian Republic was a matter of expediency rather than of principle. Filelfo, indeed, even while he was in the pay of the Republic, did not disguise the contempt with which he regarded it. His attitude was determined by no enthusiasm for the cause of liberty, but chiefly by his friendship with Carlo Gonzaga. Hence, on Gonzaga's sudden transition to the side of Francesco Sforza, Filelfo prepared to follow suit. When Sforza entered Milan, the wily humanist was ready with an oration in his praise, and ere long Filelfo was once more basking in the favour of a prince-patron. In the person of Decembrio the Republic had a more whole-hearted supporter. Owing to the prominent part which he had played in public affairs, he deemed it advisable not to await Francesco Sforza's triumph but to seek "a haven of peace" in Rome shortly before the accession of the new Duke.¹ Yet the motives which prompted Decembrio's activity were patriotic rather than Republican. He had no share in the founding of the Republic, owing to his absence from Milan on a diplomatic mission at the time of Filippo Maria's death. On his return he promised to show the same loyalty and devotion towards his country that he had formally shown towards his prince. His hostility was directed, not against a possible revival of the

¹ Borsa, M., *Decembrio e l'Umanesimo in Lombardia*. Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1893.

Dukedom, but against Venice, and it was Sforza's alliance with the rival Republic that definitely ranged Decembrio on the side of his enemies. A year after Francesco's accession the humanist wrote a poem in his honour, which he sent to Simonetta in the hope of ingratiating himself with the new dynasty. In 1452 Decembrio was back in Milan, where his joy at finding his house and library uninjured cemented his reconciliation with the House of Sforza. The relations of Filelfo and Decembrio with the Ambrosian Republic serve to show that Italian scholars could not afford to read their classics too literally. Men such as Cola da Montana, who had lost favour at Court, might seek their revenge in preaching tyrannicide upon the authority of the ancients. Yet for the most part it was the cultured and wealthy tyrant rather than the struggling Republic which formed the ideal of the man-of-letters.

When, in 1456, Francesco Sforza called Guinforte Barzizza back to Milan as the tutor of his son Galeazzo, the old circle of humanists was complete. From henceforth the Court of Milan furnished a characteristic picture of literary life at the time of the revival of learning, both in its weakness and also in its strength. Here, as elsewhere, the rivalries between individual scholars and their somewhat sordid struggles for preferment played a prominent part. On the other hand, side by side with much that was petty and undignified, there existed real enthusiasm for learning and unflagging industry in its pursuit. The aim of every humanist was universality of knowledge. Filelfo made it his proudest boast that he had mastered the whole literature of the ancients, and that he could read and write both Greek and Latin with equal facility. Decembrio's epitaph in the Church of S. Ambrogio at Milan extols him as the author of no less than 127 books, extending over a wide range of subjects. Among these were biographies of Filippo Maria Visconti and of Francesco Sforza, which to-day constitute his chief claim to renown. In the eyes of his contemporaries, however, he was above all distinguished by the knowledge of Greek that he had acquired at first-hand from Chrysoloras. To these Grecian enthusiasts the fall of Constantinople came as a blessing in disguise. Francesco Sforza profited by the occasion

to invite Constantine Lascaris to Milan, where he remained for some years as the tutor of the Duke's clever daughter, Ippolita. Other fugitive Greek scholars followed suit, thankful to impart the treasures of their language in exchange for the hospitality of the Court. The eagerness with which they were welcomed is seen in the following description of Demetrius Chalcondylas, who was lecturing in Milan between the years 1492-1511. "I heard him," wrote one of his pupils, "with incredible pleasure, because he is a Greek, because he is an Athenian and also because he is Demetrio. He appears to represent in himself the knowledge, the manners and the grace of those famous Greeks. Seeing him you seem to see Plato."¹

At the Court of Milan literary quarrels were rendered peculiarly bitter by the presence of Filelfo. "He is calumnious, envious, vain and so greedy of gold that he metes out praise or blame according to the gifts he gets,"² was the unpleasing description of a contemporary, and Filelfo's behaviour in Milan justified his previous reputation. Although a liberal salary was assigned to him, the money was often irregularly paid. Hence Filelfo spent much of his time in writing complaints and threats to the Duke and his ministers, varied by begging letters to other patrons of learning, from whom he hoped to extract a gift or a pension. Francesco Sforza was not yet sure enough of his position to expose himself lightly to the venom of Filelfo's pen, and he exerted himself to satisfy the fiery humanist until at least the *Sforziad* should be completed. This was an epic poem, or rather a chronicle in verse of Francesco's doings from the year 1447, of which only the first eight books were published. As a work of art the *Sforziad* had little to commend it, yet it served to spread Francesco's fame throughout Italy as the patron and hero of one of the most celebrated scholars of the day. Incidentally, the *Sforziad* became the vehicle for Filelfo's invective against his rival Decembrio, who figured in the poem as a fierce opponent of the House of Sforza. Decembrio retorted by epigrams, which deplored the Duke's misfortune in having "a greedy ignoramus"³ in his service. Meanwhile

¹ Tiraboschi, G., *Storia della letteratura italiana*. Florence, 1805-13.

² Cf. Rosmini, *Vita di Filelfo*, vol. ii., p. 147.

³ Borsa, *Decembrio e l'Umanesimo*.

he presented the Duke with an illuminated copy of his biography and translated the *Lives of Joseph and Tobias* for the Duchess, assuring her that they would prove "cheering food for sick persons".¹ Nevertheless, Filelfo remained the reigning favourite, and his slanders eventually drove Decembrio from the Court. The death of these two great antagonists did not bring peace to Milan. Lodovico Il Moro and his secretaries spent much valuable time in the vain attempt to heal the feud between Giorgio Merula and the Florentine, Poliziano. Later again, the humanists Parrasio and Minuziano competed for the favour of Louis XII.² Their lecture-rooms became the scene of mutual recriminations, and on the occasion of a temporary reconciliation, Parrasio naïvely congratulated his pupils upon no longer being obliged to listen to abuse of his rival. Eventually the French Government sided with Minuziano. Thereupon Parrasio, who had first won notice by his eulogy of Louis XII., left Milan for good, cursing the French as "stupid barbarians". Such unedifying episodes were largely due to the entire dependence of men-of-letters upon Court patronage. Living as they did from hand to mouth, the loss of a patron involved loss of daily bread. Hence they must needs use their pen to crush rivals and to convince princes of their power both to aid and to injure the State. The result was a close connection between literature and politics, eminently characteristic of the age. During Lodovico Sforza's struggle for supremacy both he and Simonetta had their literary champions, who hurled abuse at one another in support of their rival patrons. The epigram and the satire, no less than the dagger and the poisoned cup, found their place among the political weapons of the day.

Little original work of any permanent value was produced at the Court of Milan during the reigns of the two first Sforza. The task of Filelfo and his contemporaries consisted almost entirely in exploring new fields and in rendering Greek and Latin authors accessible to the students of their own day. A man-of-letters who possessed a good memory, the gift of lan-

¹ *Op. cit.*

² Delaruelle, *Le séjour à Milan d'Aulo Giano Parrasio*. Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1905.

guages and capacity for work might reasonably expect to win fame as a humanist even though he were entirely lacking in creative or critical faculty. Thanks, however, to the efforts of a generation of scholars, learning became the common property of their successors. From the point of view of literature, Milan passed before the end of the century from the schoolroom to the University. An intimate knowledge of the classics ceased to be an end in itself, and became, instead, the foundation of original work on the part of critic, poet or historian.

John Addington Symonds has spoken of the period in the history of learning, which corresponds roughly with the last quarter of the fifteenth century, as the Age of Academies. Milan, although without any such definite literary organisation as the Platonic Academy at Florence, had nevertheless entered upon a phase which bears out this definition. Under the auspices of Lodovico Il Moro the Court of Milan became itself a form of Academy. Thither gathered illustrious men from all parts of Italy, of varied rank and of still more varied talents. Greeks, Venetians, Florentines, nobles, secretaries, lawyers, professors, met there on equal terms, drawn thither by the Duke's generous patronage and united by the common bond of their literary enthusiasm. Comparatively few of the Court circle were natives of the Duchy. Gaspare Visconti, the refined soldier and courtier, whose poetic gift crowned many other accomplishments, was, with the exception of the historian Corio, practically the only Milanese. The subject-towns were represented by Merula, the peppery humanist of Alessandria, by Franchino Gaffuri of Lodi, the first occupant of Il Moro's newly founded Chair of Music, and by Antonio Fregoso, the soldier-poet of Genoa. Of those drawn from beyond the limits of the Duchy, Leonardo da Vinci and Bramante of Urbino stood foremost among the brilliant assembly. Both were gifted with something approaching universal genius. Enough has already been said of Leonardo's wide knowledge, eloquent conversation and attractive personality to show the vast influence which he exercised upon every form of literary activity. Bramante, although he pleased to describe himself as "*senza lettere*," was skilled in mathematics, and he also

won fame at the Court as a writer of sonnets. In one of the literary disputes which Il Moro loved, Bramante joined with the Duke and Duchess in upholding the supremacy of Dante against the more popular Petrarch. Luca Pacioli of Borgo San Sepolcro, who came to Milan in 1496, was reputed to be the greatest mathematician of the age. The first chapters of his book *De Divina Proportione*, were devoted to the praise of Il Moro and to a description of the famous men gathered at his Court. Although the book was not printed until 1509, in Venice, the manuscript edition, illustrated by Leonardo, was presented to Lodovico for "his most worthy library, already adorned with an innumerable multitude of volumes of every kind".¹ The Kingdom of Naples was represented by Serafino Aquilano, who delighted the Court by his improvisations upon the lute and by singing songs of his own composition. Niccolò da Correggio, who, like his friends Gaspare Visconti and Antonio Fregoso, divided his allegiance between the sword and the pen, formed one of the many links between Milan and his native Ferrara. His mother was the illegitimate daughter of Niccolò d'Este, and her second husband was Francesco Sforza's bastard son, Tristano. Thus young Niccolò probably grew up in his stepfather's house at Milan. He afterwards took service under the Duke of Ferrara, but when his cousin, Beatrice d'Este married Lodovico Il Moro, her Court became his headquarters and her pleasure the shrine upon which his varied gifts were offered. Among other distinguished strangers were the Venetian ambassador, Ermolao Barbaro, who combined the functions of a diplomatist with those of a man-of-letters, the Florentine poet, Bellincione, and the Athenian scholar, Chalcondylas.

Such was the gifted company gathered at the Court of Milan during the closing years of the fifteenth century. It is, perhaps, not too much to say that this group of courtiers enjoyed the chief advantages of an Academy while avoiding its characteristic defects. Thanks to the daily intercourse of cultured minds, the Court circle possessed to the full the critical and scientific spirit which distinguished the period.

¹ Tiraboschi, *op. cit.*

At the same time the very informality of the gatherings gave to the intellects of Milan a freshness and a spontaneity which were often lacking in the graver and more fastidious Academicians of Florence. Typical of the atmosphere of the Court is the story connected with the first appearance of Poliziano's *Miscellanea* in Milan. Going to his work as secretary one morning, Jacopo Antiquario found all his clerks neglecting the Duke's business while they poured over the loose sheets of some newly published book. The secretary inquired what the new book was, and on hearing that it was the *Miscellanea*, he too forgot the Duke's business. Sitting down at the clerk's desk Antiquario began to read as eagerly as they, only pausing to send to the bookseller's stall for another copy of the work. No less characteristic is the zeal with which men of various professions studied the theoretical and scientific side of their work. Soldiers, such as Pietro Monti, turned from their active life to devote themselves to the study of tactics. Leonardo da Vinci maintained that the theory of painting should be nothing short of the "universal science of the visible," and that the fully equipped artist must have studied not only perspective and anatomy but all forms of natural science. In every sphere of knowledge, authority and convention were pushed aside in the general quest for truth that was drawn from experience.

Brilliant as was the Sforza Court, it did not absorb the entire culture of the Duchy. The University of Pavia was never more flourishing than in the days of Il Moro, when it boasted some ninety professors and no less than 3,000 students. In 1489 the various schools were united under one roof in the magnificent new *Ateneo*, built at Lodovico's orders. Seven years later the Duke exempted all professors from taxation. Francesco Sforza had the library rearranged and re-catalogued, while each successive Duke added books to the collection, until it was carried off to France by the admiring Louis XII. The new chairs which were founded at Pavia in no way lessened the ancient prestige of the University with regard to Law. Giasone del Maino, who was Professor of Civil Law at the time of Il Moro's fall, was held to be the

greatest lawyer in Italy. His fame spread even to the French Court, and when Louis XII. visited Pavia in 1507, he went to the University for the express purpose of hearing Giasone speak. With regard to the Duchy in general, the spread of learning was aided by the early introduction of printing. Milan, in this respect, stood far in advance of other Italian towns. Books were printed there for the first time in 1469, that is, in the same year as at Venice and only later than in Rome. Lascaris' Greek Grammar, which appeared in Milan in 1476, was the first Greek book to be printed in Italy. From these beginnings the art of printing advanced rapidly. Alessandrio Minuziano set up a printing-press in Milan, and in 1494 this alone produced twenty-two books, including complete editions of Cicero and Tacitus.

The literary output of Milan during these years stands in marked contrast to her many advantages and to the general enthusiasm for letters which prevailed among her citizens. While every courtier dabbled in literature, men of genius were conspicuously lacking. There is no clearer proof of the low standard of poetic art in Milan than the esteem in which Bernardo Bellincione was held at the Court. In 1493, a year after Bellincione's death, Francesco Tanzio published a collection of his poems with a dedication to the Duke of Milan. Here *Il Moro* is praised for having brought to the Court "the merry poet, Bellincione, in order that by his graceful Florentine speech and his witty, terse and ready rhymes, he might teach our city to file and polish her somewhat rough tongue".¹ Before the arrival of the Florentine poet, Tanzio declares, few people in Milan even knew what was meant by a sonnet. By the time of his death there were many who not only understood the nature of sonnets but also composed them. Yet Bellincione was a mere Court verse-maker, with a tendency towards the burlesque. His productions were occasionally vulgar and more often hopelessly dull. Their chief interest to-day lies in Bellincione's intimate connection with *Il Moro*, whose virtues the poet never tired of extolling, and whose

¹ Dina, A., *Lodovico Il Moro e Gian Galeazzo Sforza nel canzoniere di Bernardo Bellincione*. Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1884.

political relations formed a fertile subject for advice and comment on the part of his admirer. In the revival of Italian poetry, which proved an important development of the period, Bellincione was regarded in the light of a master by men of the younger generation, such as Gaspare Visconti and Antonio Fregoso. Yet in justice to Milan, it must be admitted that their poetic gifts were greatly superior to those of the Florentine. From a sonnet in which Gaspare Visconti modestly disclaims the honour bestowed on him, it transpires that many of his contemporaries preferred him to Petrarch. As might be expected, Gaspare can ill bear the comparison. Nevertheless, his graceful sonnets and love lyrics reveal a refined, delicate and somewhat fantastic mind eminently characteristic of the Renaissance courtier. Typical of Gaspare at his best is the sonnet "*Io vidi belle, adorne e gentildame*".¹ Here he describes the ladies of the Court in their richly brocaded dresses, moving in slow and stately fashion through the dances of the day, each one pausing to press the hand of her lover and to exchange swift glances as they meet and part in the intricate measures of the dance. This and some of the sonnets addressed to Beatrice d'Este have a peculiar charm which is lost in Gaspare's most ambitious work, *Paolo e Daria*.

Beatrice d'Este's secretary, Vincenzo Calmeta, speaks of Niccolò da Correggio, Gaspare Visconti and Antonio Fregoso as "*tre generosi cavallieri*," who adorn the Court of Milan by their presence. There is a close affinity in the work of these friends, and their poetry seems to sum up both the limitations and the merits of the period. All three sing chiefly of the sorrows of unrequited love, all three bewail the cruelty of fortune. Their poems are tinged with a graceful melancholy that never sinks into despair, with a refined sentiment that never rises to passion. Only rarely are they kindled with a spark of the Divine fire. Niccolò da Correggio gains an additional importance by the incentive which he gave to dramatic art in Milan. His pastoral play *Cefalo*, performed at Ferrara in 1487, was among the earliest of Italian dramas. Hence when Il Moro opened a theatre at his own Court in 1493, he engaged Niccolò da

¹Cf. Verri, P., *Storia di Milano*, vol. ii., p. 74.

Correggio to write *Mopsa e Daphne*, the first piece to be performed there. In some of his poems, too, Niccolò rises to greater heights than his friends. More especially his own are his intense appreciation of natural beauty and his craving for the peace of country life which pursued him throughout his career as a soldier. The sonnet in which he lingers over the joys of

Le solitarie selve ambrose e oscure¹

has the true poetic ring. Yet the interest of his work to-day is historical rather than literary. Neither he nor his fellow-poets at the Court of Milan have stood the test of years.

Among Lodovico Il Moro's most persistent efforts for the advancement of letters was his attempt to obtain a complete and accurate history of Milan. The reign of Francesco saw the appearance of Leodrisio Crivelli's book on the early history of the House of Sforza, while Decembrio and Giovanni Simonetta produced two excellent biographies of the first Sforza Duke. Lodovico, however, desired something that would weave the deeds of his own race into the general history of the Duchy. He originally chose Giorgio Merula for the task, but his death in 1494 interrupted him at the death of Azzo Visconti (1339). Tristano Calchi, who then took up the work, found himself obliged by Merula's many inaccuracies and omissions to begin afresh, with the result that he got no further than 1323. Finally, Lodovico found a third historian in the person of Bernardino Corio. A most interesting letter of the year 1497 has been preserved² in which the Duke commends to the bishops, abbots and lay officials in the district round the Lake of Como his servant Bernardino Corio who has been sent to "explore the ancient writings pertaining to the history and deeds of our ancestors". All loyal subjects of the Duke are called upon to aid the historian by "freely opening all archives and libraries," and by giving him every facility for reading and making extracts, even to the extent of allowing him to take manuscripts to his inn, or, if need be, to Milan. Later on Corio

¹ Cf. Luzio-Renier, *Niccolò da Correggio*. *Giornale Storico*, vols. xxi., xxii.

² Gabotto, F., *Di Bernardino Corio notizie*. *Vita Nuova* II., No. 35, 1890.

was supplied with a copyist at Lodovico's expense, and no pains were spared to render his book of real historical value. Unfortunately, it was not in the Duke's power to make Corio a first-class historian. The *Storia di Milano* remains the standard history of the period, yet in the roughness of his style and in his frequent inaccuracies Corio compares most unfavourably with his Florentine contemporaries. With regard to poetry and history alike, the soil of Milan was elaborately prepared for production, but neither poet nor historian arose to take advantage of its fertility.

The death of Beatrice d'Este, followed by her husband's ruin, broke up the literary circle of the Court. During the first French occupation great efforts were made to preserve the traditions of the past. The brothers Georges and Charles d'Amboise, Etienne Poncher and Jeffroy Charles, each in turn endeavoured to act as a patron of letters and to fill the place that had been so brilliantly occupied by the Sforza Dukes. Yet only those scholars remained in Milan who could not find a more congenial asylum elsewhere. The gay *camaraderie* which had been the essence of Il Moro's Court had gone never to return. Of the numerous writers who had benefited by Lodovico's patronage, some, such as the epigrammatist Lancino Curzio, now employed their pen to abuse the fallen Duke. Others, such as Pistoia and Vincenzo Calmeta, were glad to "waste a little ink in defending so illustrious a prince". During the troublous years of the early sixteenth century, memories of a youth spent at the Court of Milan in its glory lived on in the works of two among the most famous authors of the day. Sitting under the green pergola of Ippolita Benti-voglio's garden, Matteo Bandello loved to describe his experiences as a novice at S. Maria delle Grazie, when Leonardo was at work in the Refectory and when Il Moro was constantly coming to visit his friends the monks. Tales of the illustrious men whom Bandello saw there and stories which he heard from Leonardo's lips were woven into the *Novelle* and dedicated to Ippolita, the only member of the House of Sforza who remained in Milan. So, too, Baldassare Castiglione, who went to Milan for purposes of education during the last years of

Lodovico's reign, filled his *Cortegiano* with allusions to the people whom he met there and to the beauty and splendour of his surroundings. After wide and varied experience of Italian Court life, the impressions received in his boyhood did not fade. Beatrice d'Este found her place among the noble ladies described in the *Cortegiano* as famed alike for their beauty, their virtues and their talents. The company gathered round the Duke and Duchess in the Castello of Milan seemed to Castiglione "the flower of the human race".¹

SOCIAL LIFE

"It is not without reason that, among the principal cities of Italy, Milan has been entitled '*la grande*'. . . . He who sees the size and number of her houses would think it impossible to find sufficient people to fill them; he, on the other hand, who considers the infinite number of her inhabitants must feel that there could not be enough houses to contain them."² So wrote a Venetian observer in the latter half of the sixteenth century, when the population of Milan had sunk to two-thirds of what it was before the days of foreign invasion, and when the greatness of the Duchy was commonly reputed to be a thing of the past. The picture which this Venetian gives of Milan is one of general prosperity, unmarred by traces of her former sufferings. The city is "the school of all manual arts," whither the other towns of Italy turn for instruction; she is "the originator of pomp and luxury in apparel"; she is possessed of an "infinite number of workmen in all mechanical trades". Her citizens live chiefly by trade and manufacture, and her riches consist "in the participation of the many rather than in the wealth of the few". While only two or three families enjoy an income of over 20,000 crowns, a very large proportion possess from 2,000 to 3,000. All alike benefit by the fertility of the soil, which brings such abundance of provisions to Milan as to render her the "dispensary of Italy". The whole report forms an amazing testimony to the recupera-

¹ "*Il Castello di Milano, già ricettacolo del fior degli Uomini del Mondo.*" Lettere Famigliari del Conte Baldessar Castiglione, vol. i., p. 5. Padova, 1769.

² Alberi, E., *Due relazioni di Milano*, etc.

tive power of the Duchy, to resources which years of war, plague and misrule could not permanently cripple. Moreover, in the combination of manufacturing activity with agricultural advantages, it touches upon a distinguishing characteristic which affected every department of social life in the city.

Two main industries formed the basis of Milan's prosperity as a manufacturing centre. Long before the days of the Sforza, Milanese armour was famed throughout the world, and the city boasted some hundred armouries from whence goods were despatched across the Alps to France, Switzerland and the Empire, or went eastward to be bought at high prices by the Saracens. Hardly less important was the woollen industry, which supplied Venice alone with cloth to the annual value of 120,000 ducats. These two trades brought others in their wake. As armour included the whole equipment of a knight and his horse, so the manufacture of woollen materials led on to that of the more costly fabrics necessary for the outfit of a courtier. The silk weaver, the goldsmith, the manufacturer of embroidery and of gold and silver cloth found a ready market for their wares in Milan. The artisans engaged in these numerous crafts worked, not for the consumer, but for the merchant. At first all Milanese merchants were banded together in one society, but as an industry developed, a separate organisation would arise, dedicated to this branch of trade alone. At the opening of the Sforza period, for example, the wool merchants were already distinct from the *universitas mercatorum*. Ere long the society of gold, silver and silk merchants emerged, also enjoying its special privileges and governed by its own laws.¹ It was as merchants and bankers that great Milanese families, such as the Borromei, rose to power, and many a noble house grew wealthy through trade. Thus all classes in Milan were concerned in a more or less degree with commerce and industry; society and laws alike proclaimed the overwhelming importance of the trade interest.

If, however, all were traders, all were no less agriculturists. Fear of aggression, whether from soldiers or from robbers,

¹ Verga, Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1903, p. 66.

rendered the existence of isolated farm buildings almost impossible. Hence the country round Milan was divided into small holdings, cultivated by people who returned to the city in the evening, bringing their cattle with them. Every merchant or lawyer had at least his little farm in which he invested his savings, and from whence he drew enough grain, oil, wine, cheese and milk to supply the needs of his family. So universal was this system that it was recognised in the public holidays prescribed by the laws of Milan. S. Peter's Day, at the end of June, came at a convenient time for the harvest, while Michaelmas Day fell within the vintage season. Hence, for a couple of weeks round these two festivals, the law-courts were closed, business was suspended, and the citizens flocked out to their farms to superintend the ingathering of their crops. Depending as they did on the fruits of their own cultivation, a good or a bad harvest was a matter of life and death to the citizens of Milan. Even in time of peace, a bad season brought famine in its train. On the other hand, after a good season, such as a chronicler describes in 1503,¹ grain, fruit and wine could be had "in great abundance and very cheap," despite past wars and the continued presence of foreign soldiers in the Duchy.

Among the various ways in which this fusion of agriculture and industry showed itself in society, was the comparatively small importance which it attached to the distinction between noble and non-noble. When Antonio de Beatis travelled through France in 1517, he was astonished at the privileged condition of the French nobility. They had, he thought, "more cause to thank God than any one else," it being certain that as Nature had made them noble by birth, they could not die of hunger nor practise "low trades" (*arte vile*), "as they do for the most part in our country, where very few live as nobles, even if they have the means".² If, on the one hand, the noble tended to identify himself with the trading interest, the merchant who invested his money in land joined hands with the feudal nobility. The aristocracy of Milan was one of wealth and not of birth. Social and political rivalry lay not between

¹ Paullo, A. da, *Cronaca Milanese*.

² Beatis, *Die Reise des Kardinals Luigi d'Aragona*.

noble and non-noble, but between merchant and artisan, between capital and labour. So, too, the curious mixture of great magnificence with primitive simplicity in the life of the day may perhaps be traced to the conflicting tendencies at work among a population which was at the same time manufacturing and agricultural. Visitors to Milan, whether Italian or ultramontane, seldom failed to be impressed by the splendour of the ladies' dresses, often made entirely of cloth of gold, adorned with rich embroideries and loaded with jewels. All such extravagances were, indeed, forbidden by the sumptuary laws. No one of lower rank than the wife of a knight, a captain, a ducal councillor or a member of the College of Jurisprudence might wear cloth of gold, silver or brocade, except on her sleeves, nor sew her dresses with pearls. Low-cut gowns were forbidden to all classes alike. Yet there is much to show that these prohibitions were rarely enforced. If, for instance, the statutes condemning the use of embroideries had been rigidly enforced, an important Milanese trade would have been ruined. The luxury that was censured on moral grounds by a paternal Government was encouraged in the interests of a trading community. Several modern inventions were legislated against in Milan some years earlier than in any other Italian city, a proof rather of her enterprise than of excessive zeal on the part of her sumptuary officials. In the new statute-book of 1498, a heavy fine was imposed upon any lady seen driving in a carriage through the streets of Milan. At Ferrara, laws against carriages first occur in 1514, and Antonio de Beatis speaks of the carriages which he saw in Milan in 1517 as of something entirely new and remarkable.

It is an abrupt transition to turn from accounts of Milan's magnificence to provisions such as the following, which occurs among the regulations drawn up for the kitchen of the Castello in 1485. "Item: That there shall always be good bread and good wine provided for the family, so that if at any time there should not be enough of other things, these should not be lacking; and this both for the convenience of the family and for the honour of strangers arriving unexpectedly."¹ The thought

¹ Beltrami, *La Vita nel Castello di Milano*, p. 31.

of the splendour-loving Lodovico Il Moro entertaining some foreign dignitary with "good bread and good wine" in default of more sumptuous fare, is strangely incongruous. Yet it is quite in accordance with the simple habits of life that prevailed throughout the Duchy. Wheaten bread was a luxury only known to a few, home-grown rye and millet being the ordinary fare. The vintage was trodden out on the several farms, where hired labourers claimed the right to the wine made from the dregs of the fermented grapes. Until the sixteenth century, when more conventional ideas were imported by the Spaniards, the most well-to-do families were content to perform the menial tasks of the household themselves. During the reign of Francesco Sforza, frugal habits prevailed in the ducal establishment no less than in the city and territory, while even in later days the Court of Milan retained traces of its former simplicity. The Milanese nobility were called upon to lend their tapestries for Court festivities, and until 1474 the Duke boasted but a single canopy, which was moved to his various residences as the occasion required. Even then a new canopy was only ordered because the old one was in too dilapidated a condition to bear the journey from the Court of Arengo to the Castello. For all its outward pomp, the Castello of Milan must have been singularly lacking in comforts and conveniences. Except for the narrow spiral steps of the Torre delle Asse, the only means of communication between the upper and lower floor of the Corte Ducale was an external staircase. *Stamegne*, or linen windows, were used throughout the Castello and only renewed on great occasions. A room which served as a Council Chamber by day was turned into a bedroom at night. The cold of the great draughty rooms in winter could have been no less intense than the heat in summer, which once forced the Secret Council to beg for a change of quarters, "the chamber ordinarily allotted to us being, at this season, so much exposed to the sun that we cannot remain there without great discomfort".¹

Despite much that was primitive in the ducal household, it is clear that luxury was on the increase throughout the

¹ Beltrami, *Castello*. Doct. of April, 1496.

Sforza period, and that the impulse in this direction sprang from the Court. When Il Moro instituted a reform of the statutes in 1498, many new sumptuary regulations were added, which had not been necessary on the promulgation of Gian Galeazzo Visconti's statute-book in 1396. The preamble bewailed the excessive expenditure which tended to impoverish all classes and to act as a check upon matrimony. A special crusade was instituted against superfluous display at births and baptisms, which was declared to be a growing abuse. Gold or silver cradles and embroidered bed coverings were prohibited. The furniture of the bedroom must be simple, the ladies visiting the mother must limit their gifts to eatables of the value of sixteen lire; only plain fruit (*fructus naturales*) and cakes might be provided for their refreshment. Considering the date of the prohibitions, the fashion for such extravagances may well be traced to the unwonted magnificence which had marked the birth of Beatrice d'Este's first-born in 1493. A gilded cradle, a room hung entirely with crimson, a gorgeous quilt in mulberry brocade with the Sforza device, and a grand show of presents had been among the special features of the occasion. Another curious instance of the aping of Court manners is seen in the assertion of a contemporary writer, that black slaves became more numerous in Milan at the end of the fifteenth century, out of compliment to Lodovico Il Moro. A certain number of eastern slaves had always been employed in Milan as domestic servants, but since the year 1450 the slave trade had steadily declined. Now, however, no courtier was without at least one black page "because Lodovico Sforza, Duke of Milan, had himself nicknamed 'Il Moro'".¹

The normal tendency of society in a capital to model itself upon the Court could not but be increased where the connection between the two was as close as in Milan. Prince and citizen took their pleasures together, performed their religious duties together, and enjoyed, in short, a freedom of intercourse that would have been impossible in a larger State. The daily life of Massimiliano Sforza began, from the tenderest age, with going to hear Mass at S. Maria delle Grazie. "Count Massi-

¹ Muralto, *Annalia*. Cf. Verga, *Arch. Stor. Lomb.*, 1905, p. 188.

miliano has adopted a very good manner of life," wrote his tutor, in October, 1496;¹ "he rises early in the morning and first has breakfast with one or two pieces of bread, as the doctors have ordered; then I take him to S. Maria delle Gratie to see Mass, to His Highness's great delight." After dinner Massimiliano would hunt in the park or pay visits in the city, while on wet days he and Francesco played together in the Sala della Palla. In 1497 the family party at the Castello received an addition in the person of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, who was made Archbishop of Milan at the age of eighteen. He, too, was constantly to be seen in the city, sharing the occupations of his nephews. One day in Lent, 1498, during the Duke's temporary absence from Milan, his secretary wrote to him that the Cardinal and all the Court had been "to the preaching at S. Francesco". In the afternoon Ippolito held audience, "where, however, there was little business doing," and later he attended a service at S. Dionisio, once more accompanied by the Court.² On the Feast of the Annunciation Lodovico was informed that the Court had been to High Mass at the Duomo, and that the Cardinal had remained throughout the service, bearing himself "with his accustomed gravity and modesty". It may well be that thoughts of the day's hunting at Cusago, which he had planned for the morrow, mingled with the devotions of this youthful ecclesiastic. In the eyes of the Duke, Cardinal Ippolito's whole-hearted devotion to the House of Sforza made him peculiarly suited for the office of Archbishop. He could, however, have done little to raise the religious life of Milan, which appears at this time to have reached a low ebb. Beatis contrasts "*la poca religione*" that was to be found in his own country with the crowded German and Flemish churches where "they do not talk of merchandise nor amuse themselves as in Italy, but occupy themselves solely with hearing Mass and saying their prayers, all kneeling".³ It is probable that Beatis' remarks were especially applicable to Milan. The city had experienced no such religious revival

¹ Milan, Archivio di Stato, *Potenze Sovrane, Massimiliano, Vicende personali*.

² Archivio di Stato, *Potenze Sovrane, Lodovico Il Moro, Vicende personali*.

³ Beatis, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

as had Florence. Her commercial interest and her great outward magnificence alike tended to emphasise the material side of life. Piety among her citizens showed itself less in devotional fervour than in such practical good works as building hospitals and founding schools.

In the letters which Lodovico received on the subject of his children, there is much that bears out Philippe de Commynes' famous assertion that in Italy no great difference was made between legitimate and illegitimate. Lodovico's sons by Cecilia Gallerani and Lucrezia Crivelli were visited daily by one of the secretaries, and reports of their well-being were forwarded to Il Moro in exactly the same way as Massimiliano and Francesco were visited and reported upon. More than this, free intercourse was permitted between the sons of Beatrice d'Este and those of her rivals. "To-day," wrote Massimiliano to his father in June, 1498, "I have visited Signor Cesare and Signor Gian Paolo, who are both well. To the aforesaid Gian Paolo I have given my wooden horse, in the saddle of which his lordship can hardly sit, being up to this time so big, fat and well-proportioned. With this and with our company, Signor Gian Paolo showed singular pleasure."¹ The recipient of the wooden horse was the son of Lucrezia Crivelli, and he must, at this date, have been just a year old. Writing from France in 1526 to Francesco, then Duke of Milan, Massimiliano mentions "Il Signor Gian Paolo, our common brother," whom he has regarded from the very day of his birth "as another self".² But for Gian Paolo's sudden death in 1535 it seems most probable that he would have been allowed to succeed Francesco in the Dukedom.

The separatism which distinguished the political relations between the various towns of the Duchy of Milan had its counterpart in social life. Manners, dress and even the physique of the inhabitants varied considerably between city and city. Both Jean d'Auton and Antonio de Beatis were struck by the golden hair which distinguished the ladies of Genoa from their Milanese sisters, while d'Auton noticed that

¹ Archivio di Stato, *Potenze Sovrane, Massimiliano, Vicende personali*.

² *Cod. cit.* Cf. Appendix,

it was worn in a peculiar style, being twisted like a crown round a little pad of linen. Genoese dresses were for the most part of white silk, made short enough to disclose white or red stockings with shoes to match. According to the French chronicler, the ladies were of medium height and rather plump, with round faces "very fresh and white" and good teeth.¹ The whole description forms a distinct contrast to that of the beauties of Milan. Here cloth of gold and crimson velvet formed the fashionable dress materials, while the ladies wore their hair falling half over their cheeks and then caught back into a long twist in the peculiar style which can be seen in portraits of that date. To a certain extent, the influence of the Court warred against separatist tendencies. Representatives of the chief families of the Duchy held posts at the Castello, while State ceremonies brought people from all parts of the country to share in the gay doings at the capital. Nevertheless, local interests and local traditions retained the first place throughout the Sforza era, and it was, indeed, their supremacy that lent much of its distinctive charm to the social life of the day. Confined within the narrow limits of the city boundaries, life in Milan was seen, as might be said, in its concentrated essence. Politics and Society, Art and Literature, had but one world in common, and a crisis in a single department had its effect upon all. Hence life could not but be intense, vivid, varied; exposed, it is true, to sudden disaster, but singularly free from monotony.

¹ *Chroniques de Jean d'Auton*, vol. ii., p. 212.

CHAPTER XIV

CONCLUSION

(1535—1859)

THE death of Francesco Sforza brought fresh perplexities to his imperial suzerain. Francis I. might tolerate a native ruler under imperial protection, but he was not likely to acquiesce tamely in Charles V.'s assumption of direct control over the Duchy. The Emperor, for his part, was well content to remain the virtual master of Milan, allowing another to enjoy the nominal authority. Yet, in the absence of direct heirs, there was no obvious successor to the dead Duke. Christina bade the Milanese ambassador inform Charles V. that she had been promptly recognised as sovereign in her husband's stead, and that she was surrounded by wise and faithful counsellors, who would aid her in carrying on the work of government, pending further instructions from the Emperor. At the same time, loyal adherents of the House of Sforza wrote to express their joy at the prospect of having Christina for their patron. The rule of his niece, however, unless it were accompanied by her marriage with a native or a French prince, afforded no solution of Charles V.'s problem. After the failure of a scheme for the creation of a Hapsburg-Valois State under Christina and the Duke of Angoulême, the former left Milan to wed the Duke of Lorraine. This marriage closed Christina's brief career as Duchess of Milan, and it was only after various vicissitudes that she returned to Lombardy in 1557, to end her days in retirement at her dower town of Tortona. If there had been any member of the House of Sforza at all suited for the ducal throne, Charles would probably have been willing to consider his claims. But of all Francesco I.'s legitimate des-



CHRISTINA OF DENMARK, DUCHESS OF MILAN

PORTRAIT BY HOLBEIN

National Gallery

cendants, there remained only Bona, Duchess of Bari, the sole surviving daughter of Gian Galeazzo and Isabella, while she, as the wife of King Sigismund of Poland, had little concern in the affairs of Italy. The descendants of Francesco's brother, Bosio, Count of Santa Fiora, formed, indeed, a flourishing collateral branch of the family. Sforza, who became Count of Santa Fiora in 1535, had been sent to the Court of his Milanese cousins to be trained as a soldier. On his mother's side Sforza was a Farnese, and now Pope Paul III. wrote to thank Christina for the care which she had bestowed upon his grandson, begging her to complete her kindness by recommending the boy to the Emperor. Yet no one could have imagined that Charles V. would invest a papal *nipote* of fifteen with the Duchy of Milan. Sforza probably obtained all that his friends expected for him when he was taken into imperial service, to become one of the most distinguished among Charles V.'s Italian soldiers. The only member of the House of Sforza who was seriously considered as a successor to Francesco II. was Gian Paolo, Marquis of Caravaggio, the son of Il Moro and Lucrezia Crivelli. On the death of the Duke, Gian Paolo at once set out for Rome in order to gain papal support for his claims. As he crossed the Apennines he was seized with sudden illness and he did not live to reach Rome. His infant son, Muzio, carried on the line of Caravaggio, but the father's death destroyed the last hope of seeing a Sforza Duke upon the throne of Milan.

The next ten years were spent in fruitless negotiation for the settlement of Milan upon the basis of a Hapsburg-Valois marriage. It was during this period that Charles V., exasperated at Francis I.'s refusal to come to terms, offered to engage his rival in personal combat with Milan and Burgundy as the stakes of the duel. The challenge had no practical result, and in 1540 the French King once more broke off negotiations on what appeared to be the eve of a permanent settlement. Thereupon Charles invested his son Philip with the Duchy of Milan. His action did not, however, prevent the question from being reopened at the Treaty of Crespi, when it was decided that Angoulême, now the Duke of Orleans, should rule Milan in conjunction with a Hapsburg princess. His

death in 1545 preserved the Duchy for Philip, and ushered in the period of Spanish domination in Milan.

In his desire not to increase the apprehensions of those who looked with suspicion upon any advance of the imperial power in Italy, Charles made as few changes as possible in Milan upon the death of Francesco Sforza. Leyva realised a long-standing ambition in becoming Lieutenant-General, but he was not allowed to indulge his despotic tendencies. Massimiliano Stampa, a loyal servant of the House of Sforza, retained his post as Castellan, while Taverna, the most trusted adviser of Francesco's last years, was Chancellor until his death in 1560. Charles V.'s Constitutions, promulgated in 1541, did little more than confirm the Code of Laws which had been compiled at Francesco's orders from the ducal decrees. In cases for which the Constitutions did not provide, the old Statutes of Milan still held good. Even when Philip finally became master of Milan, the transition to Spanish rule was made less abrupt by the appointment of Ferrante Gonzaga as Lieutenant-General. Although Ferrante was not very popular in the Duchy, the interest which he took in adorning and improving the capital made him at least acceptable. During the eight years of his governorship (1546-54) Spanish customs and influences advanced but slowly. Yet the gradual way in which the Spanish domination came about, did but bind Milan more firmly beneath its yoke. By the middle of the century the rule of the Spaniard was generally recognised as the only solution of the Milanese problem. According to Italian opinion, Spain was less dangerous than either France or Germany, because she was not such a near neighbour. At the same time the power of Spain was sufficient to strike awe into the native States, and to check their attempts at aggression. Of an independent Duke there was no longer any question. The idea that Milan should regain her lost autonomy and should rank once more among the native States of Italy was regarded as "vain to desire and impossible to attain".¹

The century and a half of Spanish domination forms the most dreary episode in the history of Milan. From Leyva to

¹ Alberi, E., *Due relazioni di Milano*, etc.

the Prince of Vaudémont, who was driven from Milan by Eugene's victorious army in 1706, no less than forty-nine governors upheld the authority of Spain in the Duchy. While this constant succession of rulers checked the development of native or individual characteristics in the administration, the distance from the central government enabled each Lieutenant to act as an irresponsible sovereign during his tenure of office. "He followed no other law save his own will,"¹ is Verrì's verdict upon Fuentes, whom he previously acknowledges to be the best of all the Spanish governors in Milan. The pressure of taxation weighed heavily upon all classes of society, the more so as the taxes were often farmed to Genoese traders, "greedy people and hated by the Milanese". During the seventeenth century Milan bore the brunt of the war between France and Spain, when a French army again marched upon the Duchy, and when Mazarin followed the policy of Francis I. in stirring up the Este Dukes of Modena against their Spanish neighbours. In 1576, and again in 1630, Milan suffered from terrible outbreaks of plague. Internal faction was intensified rather than suppressed by foreign rule. Spanish etiquette and Spanish susceptibility to insult provided fresh occasion for quarrels, while the weakness and partiality of justice gave wider scope for their prosecution. Nobles hired *bravi* to perform their acts of vengeance, and, although the severest penalties were imposed upon crimes of violence, only a small proportion of wrongdoers suffered punishment. Amid the general insecurity, the custom of seeking the protection of a lord increased rapidly, giving fresh power to those whose protection was sought, and creating interminable feuds among the several protectors.

Despotic as was its nature, the absolutism of Spanish rule was mitigated by the ancient rights and privileges of the Duchy. Throughout the seventeenth century Milan never wholly lost her traditions of self-government. The leading families in the city were represented in the Senate, which theoretically retained its old powers, although in practice it was largely overshadowed by the Lieutenant and his Secret Council. The

¹ *Storia di Milano*, vol. ii.

Council of Sixty, composed of representatives from the six gates, could claim descent from the ancient Council of Nine Hundred, while it exercised that share in the city elections in which it had been confirmed by the Constitutions of 1541. In 1543 a Congregation of State was formed of representatives from the chief towns of the Duchy, which carried on the administration during the frequent absence of the supreme authorities through the exigencies of war. At a time when the chief functions of Government were conducting trials and levying taxes, and when the caprice of the Lieutenant over-rode all law, these semi-popular institutions could not do much practical service. Isolated instances, such as the resistance made by the Council of Sixty to the introduction of the Inquisition, the vigorous action of the Vicar of Provision in dealing with the plague of 1576, or the refusal of Cremona to contribute towards a gift to the Spanish monarch, alone testified to the survival of independent municipal life. Nevertheless, the mere presence of native organisation prevented the subjugation of Milan from being as complete as that of Naples, while it kept alive some spirit of independence in the darkest hours of foreign oppression.

The one person in Milan strong enough to offer effective resistance to the Spanish Government was the Archbishop. Traditions of a day when the Archbishop had been the virtual ruler of the city still gave prestige to the occupant of the See of Milan, while the observance of the peculiar Ambrosian rite in the Milanese Church brought with it a certain independence of papal control. During the period of Spanish domination the pretensions of the Archbishop were pressed to the uttermost by those two remarkable members of the Borromeo family, who, but for a ten years' interval, occupied the Archiepiscopal See from 1559 until 1631. "I do not send you as governor of the province of Milan, but as minister to Carlo Borromeo,"¹ Philip II. is held to have said, on appointing the Duke of Terranuova to the office of Lieutenant-General. The story, at least, serves to illustrate the position which the Archbishop won for himself in the Duchy. From the moment of his arrival in Milan he

¹Bonfadini, R., *Milano nei suoi momenti storici*, 2 vols., Milano, 1885.

waged war upon the secular authority in support of the claims of the Church. Terranuova's predecessor, Requesens, was excommunicated for denying the Archbishop's right to penal jurisdiction. The President of the Senate was cited to Rome for protesting against Borromeo's insistence upon the immunity of his household from punishment in the secular courts. At the same time Borromeo showed his entire freedom from motives of self-seeking by renouncing three-quarters of his revenue and by throwing himself heart and soul into the fearful struggle with the plague. It is no wonder that a man at once so single-minded and so intrepid proved the arbiter of Lombardy. If Carlo Borromeo represents the mediæval type of saint, Federico is no less typically modern. One of his first acts was to make a Concordat with the Spanish governor, which terminated the feud between the ecclesiastical and civil authorities. During the plague of 1630 he worked with the Committee of Health to discover the causes and remedies of such epidemics. His name is to-day chiefly connected with that zeal for learning to which the Ambrosiana Library bears permanent witness. Yet, although Federico's methods were different from those of his cousin, his objects were the same. Where Carlo burned witches and heretics, Federico converted them. While one championed the cause of the Church by uncompromising resistance to all opponents, the other did so by means of persuasion and conciliation.

Both of them striking and vigorous personalities, the Borromean cousins did much to preserve the individuality of Milan and to prevent her from becoming socially, as well as politically, a Spanish province. Nevertheless, the value of their influence was to a certain extent undermined by their association with the Counter-Reformation in its crudest and most uncompromising form. Carlo Borromeo was the nephew of Pope Pius IV., and when he became Archbishop of Milan, it was with the intention of making his diocese the field upon which the principles of the Catholic reaction should be put into practice. In the general demoralisation of the Duchy many real abuses had crept into the Church. Yet the work of reform was carried out in a spirit of fanaticism that could not

but bring fresh evils in its train. The Inquisition was introduced regardless of the people's protests, and in the absence of any real heresy, it concerned itself chiefly with the suppression of witchcraft. Incidentally it played into the hands of Spain, being used as a convenient instrument for discovering elements of sedition among the inhabitants of the Duchy. Amid the burnings of witches and the exorcism of devils, religion rapidly degenerated into superstition. For all his devotion to Milan, Carlo Borromeo was ecclesiastic before he was patriot. While he hurled defiance at the Spanish Government, he unwittingly contributed towards the degradation of his fellow-citizens, and in so doing bound them faster beneath the yoke of the foreigner.

The death of the last Hapsburg King of Spain in 1700 involved Milan in fresh warfare, from which there was no real respite until the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1746. When the Peace of Utrecht ended the War of Spanish Succession by recognising the Bourbon candidate as King of Spain while stripping him of his Italian possessions, the fate of Milan had already been decided. Eugene's occupation of Milan in September, 1706, and his subsequent nomination as Governor for the Emperor Joseph I., brought the Duchy beneath the sceptre of the House of Austria. From that time, but for occasional intervals, Austrian rule prevailed in Milan until the triumph of Italian independence in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the Austrian Hapsburgs did not make good their hold upon the Duchy without interference on the part of their rivals. The mere fact that Milan was in the hands of the Emperor revived ancient fears of imperial predominance in Italy. In view of the ambitions of the Emperor Charles VI., the prospect of the extinction of both Medici in Florence and Farnese in Parma brought these apprehensions within the sphere of practical politics. Preparations for war began as early as 1729, and four years later Milan was occupied by Charles Emmanuel III. of Savoy, acting as the ally of France and Spain. Charles Emmanuel entered Milan on 11th December, 1733, to obtain possession of the Castello after a fourteen days' siege. Then, for the first time since the death of Francesco Sforza, Milan

had an Italian lord. Although the presence of French troops called for considerable sacrifices on the part of the citizens, the three years of Charles Emmanuel's rule were justly appreciated. The new prince mingled freely with his subjects, going to the Duomo on foot, unprotected by a *baldacchino*, and giving dances in the Castello. Milanese occupied the chief offices, while the more flagrant abuses in the administration were remedied. As early as January, 1734, the Fiscal Magistrate, Gabriele Verri, wrote in his diary: "The people begin to grow fond of the present Government".¹ It seemed as though the Ducal regime had returned, and the departure of Charles Emmanuel, on the restoration of Milan to Austria by the peace of 1736, was witnessed with genuine regret by the inhabitants. Four years later the War of Austrian Succession brought fresh disturbance to Italy, in the course of which Milan was occupied for three months by Don Philip of Spain. Only in 1746 did the Duchy settle down to a period of peace and of reviving prosperity under the rule of Maria Theresa. At each shuffling of the Italian States among the Powers of Europe, Austria had contrived to remain mistress of Milan. Yet this had only been done at the cost of the gradual advance of Savoy upon the western frontiers of the Duchy. The process began in 1713 by the surrender of Valenza, Alessandria and the Val Sesia to Victor Amadeus. In 1736 Charles Emmanuel obtained Novara and Tortona as the price of his withdrawal from Milan. Finally, the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle brought the frontiers of Savoy to the Ticino by confirming Charles Emmanuel in the possession of Bobbio, Voghera and Vigevano, the bribe with which Maria Theresa had lured him to her side during the War of Austrian Succession. In view of future events, this absorption of Milanese territory by Savoy and Charles Emmanuel's brief rule in Milan give colour and interest to the somewhat profitless struggles of the first half of the eighteenth century.

The opening of Maria Theresa's reign in Milan had augured badly for its success. Her insistence upon Austrian methods alienated the people, and the welcome which the Spaniards received in 1745, as well as the long reaction which followed

¹ Bonfadini, *op. cit.*

their withdrawal, must chiefly be laid at her door. Nevertheless, Maria Theresa's rule and that of her sons raised Milan to new life. From 1746 reform became the fashion, and progress showed itself in every department of public life. Even before that date, the endless taxes of the Spanish regime were replaced by a single direct tribute known as the *Diaria*. Now Pietro Verri's book on the trade of Milan waged successful war upon the widespread financial corruption which paralysed the resources of the city. Cesare Beccaria's treatise on *Crimes and Penalties* paved the way for much-needed judicial reform. Under Leopold II. even the constitutional problem was touched, and in 1790 the Emperor sanctioned a representative assembly to "expound the wants of the Milanese". The small result of this conference was due chiefly to the conservative spirit of the representatives, who declined to ask for the constitution which Leopold was apparently willing to grant.

The possession of Tuscany, which passed in 1736 to Maria Theresa's husband, gave the Austrian Hapsburgs an interest in, and a knowledge of, Italy which had been foreign to their Spanish cousins. Leopold II. spent long years as Grand Duke of Tuscany before he succeeded his brother as Emperor, and the experience which he gained in Florence was used for the benefit of Milan. Maria Theresa's third son, Ferdinand, also became an Italian prince by his marriage with the heiress of Modena. In 1771 Ferdinand was made Governor of Milan, and for the next twenty-five years he and his wife (another Beatrice d'Este) held their Court at the capital. Under Ferdinand's auspices and those of his able minister, Count Firmian, improvements were carried out in a generous spirit. The navigation between the Adda and Milan was at last made perfect. The Scala Theatre was opened. The population increased, trade revived and Milan became again the centre of prosperity and culture. Thanks to a treaty of commerce and alliance between the various rulers of Italy, the Seven Years' War had no Italian aspect. Only after fifty years of unbroken peace did the advent of Napoleon introduce a new period of unrest into the history of Milan.

When on 15th May, 1796, Napoleon Bonaparte entered

Milan at the head of a victorious army, he stood upon the very threshold of his career. Less than two months before, he had been promoted to the command of the army of Italy at the age of twenty-six. Now, Victor Amadeus III. of Sardinia had been forced into an inglorious peace, the Archduke Ferdinand had fled before the approach of the French, and the young general found himself, for the first time, the centre of attraction in a large and important city. Napoleon took up his quarters in the Palazzo Serbelloni, where he was joined by his newly married wife, Josephine. Republican propaganda had been so far successful in Milan as to make many of the citizens hail the French as deliverers. Hence the Palazzo Serbelloni soon became the resort of all the most cultured and progressive men of the city. Meanwhile Napoleon continued his victorious campaign against Austria, until he controlled all North Italy west of the Adige. On the withdrawal of the Austrians many of the Lombard cities declared their independence. Napoleon, however, loath to create a number of small States, summoned a congress of deputies to Milan, where he obtained from them a declaration in favour of a single Lombard Republic. In July, 1797, this new State came into being with the title of the Cisalpine Republic and with Milan as its capital. Three months later it was recognised by Austria and her allies in the Treaty of Campo-Formio.

So far republican enthusiasm had carried all before it, but it was not long before the weaknesses of a system which had no real root in Italy became apparent. The Constitution of the Cisalpine Republic, modelled on the French Constitution of the Year III., was foreign to Italian traditions. Patriotic sentiment was outraged by seeing many of Lombardy's most priceless artistic treasures carried off to France. In Milan, where nobles and people had shared the burden of foreign oppression, the class hatred fostered by the French Revolution found small response. Shopkeepers, according to an Italian writer, addressed their noble customers as *cittadino padrone* instead of as *eccellentissimo signor padrone*, and thought that they had thereby embraced the principles of the Revolution.¹ The

¹ Bonfadini, *op. cit.*

most enlightened citizens were not prepared to adopt the French programme in its entirety. Hence the Government was forced to lean upon a group of agitators, whose policy took the form of slavish imitation of French methods. The violence of the reaction which followed Suvorov's occupation of Milan, on behalf of the Austro-Russian alliance in April, 1799, testified to the unreal character of the regime which it replaced.

In June, 1800, Napoleon was back again in Milan, where he joined in a solemn *Te Deum* at the Duomo as a thank-offering for his victory at Marengo. When Lombardy had been wrested for the second time from the grip of Austria, the Cisalpine Republic was revived as a buffer State between Austrian Venice and French Piedmont. In 1804, however, the Cisalpine Republic was transformed into the Kingdom of Italy, with Eugene de Beauharnais as its Viceroy, and ere long the whole of North Italy was included within its boundaries. Ten years later, when Napoleon's power was tottering to its fall, Eugene made an effort to obtain the North Italian Kingdom for himself. Yet, despite his real merits as a governor, heavy taxation and growing dislike of the French system rendered the Viceroy unpopular in Milan. Loyalty to Napoleon prevented Eugene himself from asking the congress of Vienna for the vacant throne, while his suggestion that the Milanese Senate should do so for him met with no adequate response. Far from desiring a French sovereign, Milan marked the occasion of Napoleon's abdication by the ruthless murder of the French Minister of Finance. The mass of citizens, caring only for peace, welcomed the return to Austrian rule, while the newly formed Italian Liberal party had perforce to content themselves with Metternich's assurance that the Government should "conform to Italian character and customs".¹ The Napoleonic era was over, but its effect upon Milan proved deep and lasting. While Rome, Florence and Genoa sank to the level of French departments, administered directly from Paris, Milan remained throughout the period the capital of a semi-independent State. She became, indeed, for the time being, the first city in Italy. This prominent position gratified the

¹ Bolton-King, *History of Italian Unity*, vol. i., p. 14.

pride of her citizens while it kindled their ambitions. In the same way, the splendid service performed by the Lombard Legion gave the Duchy new confidence in her military powers. The reforms of the eighteenth century had revived the prosperity of Milan. Now the Napoleonic system, with its improved education and its high ideals, awakened her slumbering desires for national and political liberty. Both combined to fit her for an important part in the last great struggle for freedom which lay before the Italian States.

If the Austrian Government had, in any sense, kept its promise to respect the claims of nationality in North Italy, Milan might well have been reconciled to foreign rule. Trade, as ever, was all-important to her citizens. Thus commercial interests rendered them both averse to change and also appreciative of the value of Austrian administration. With good administration, however, went political tyranny of the most irritating type. The central Congregations for Lombardy and Venetia, which formed Austria's sole concession in 1815, were practically restricted to the work of local government. Spies of Austria permeated every class of society. Political offenders were treated with the utmost brutality, and the ordinary forms of justice were dispensed with in all State trials. Hence the best elements in Lombard society were gradually united in their common hatred of Austria, and in their desire to emancipate their country from her yoke. The Romanticist movement, which found its chief Milanese exponent in Alessandro Manzoni, and which made literature the vehicle for advanced political teaching; the influence of nobles owning property on both sides of the Ticino, who brought to Milan the patriotic ideals which they imbibed in the freer air of Piedmont; the formation of a railway between Milan and Venice, over which the two cities joined hands in successful opposition to the Government—each in its different way helped to hasten the crisis and to prepare Lombardy for revolution.

Two comparatively small incidents paved the way for the Milanese rising of 1848.¹ In September, 1847, the enthusiastic reception given to the Italian Archbishop who had been

¹ Cf. Bolton-King, vol. i., p. 195 *seq.*

appointed to the See of Milan, provoked the first conflict with the authorities. The disturbance did not assume serious proportions, yet it left behind it a feeling of irritation which culminated in the Tobacco Riots of the following January. In order to strike a financial blow at the Government, the citizens bound themselves to refrain from the use of tobacco. For some days there was hardly a cigar to be seen in Milan, until the Government organised a counter-demonstration by means of a large distribution of tobacco to the Austrian garrison. With foreign soldiers ostentatiously smoking in the streets, a riot was inevitable. When this was crushed with wholly unnecessary violence and considerable loss of life, Milan was goaded to the pitch of exasperation. Two months later the news of the Vienna revolution presented an opportunity for revenge. During the Five Days (17th-22nd March) the population rose as one man and drove the Austrian forces from Milan. This splendid achievement on the part of untrained and unarmed citizens met with an enthusiastic response. Volunteers from all parts of Italy joined in the national rising, and Charles Albert of Sardinia was at length prevailed upon to declare war with Austria. With the opening of hostilities, however, the inherent weaknesses of the revolution were revealed. As in the days of the Ambrosian Republic, the Provisional Government in Milan showed itself singularly incapable of military organisation. Its failure to make adequate provision for war helped to bring about the fusion of Lombardy with Piedmont in order that the campaign might be conducted with greater unanimity and vigour. Once the fusion was effected, it brought into prominence the many different issues and interests that divided the two provinces. Bitter controversy arose as to whether Turin or Milan should be the future capital, while the republican element in Milan, headed by Mazzini, looked upon fusion with monarchical Piedmont in the light of a betrayal. Meanwhile Charles Albert was proving himself to be no Francesco Sforza in point of military ability. The Austrians were allowed time to concentrate in the famous fortresses of the Quadrilateral, and a campaign ensued which terminated in disaster for the Italians. Triumphs such as Santa Lucia and the fall of Peschiera won lasting glory

for Italian arms, yet the bravery of the troops at length succumbed before the blunders of their leaders. After their defeat at Custozza (25th July, 1848) the Italians were forced back upon Milan, and on 5th August the news spread through the city that Charles Albert had decided upon capitulation. The more advanced spirits endeavoured to rejoice at his failure, saying that now at least they were their own masters.¹ Yet Garibaldi proclaimed the People's War only to retire to Switzerland before an overwhelming Austrian force. Seven months later Charles Albert suffered his final reverse at Novara, a place that seemed fraught with disaster for Milan. As Lodovico Il Moro's collapse at Novara and his attempt to escape among the Swiss troops gave Milan to the first of her many invaders, so Charles Albert's defeat on the same spot, followed by his escape through the Austrian lines to exile and early death, doomed Milan to her last and worst period of foreign oppression.

There is no need to dwell upon the horrors which Milan endured during the years when she lay crushed beneath the brutal military despotism of the Austrian general, Radetzky. Suffice it to say that they were enough to heal all divisions between the citizens and their Piedmontese neighbours, and to render Austria's belated attempts at milder government wholly unavailing. When on 7th June, 1859, Louis Napoleon and Victor Emmanuel entered Milan after their victory at Magenta, they were greeted with the wildest ovations. A few days later the citizens hailed with joy Victor Emmanuel's declaration that Lombardy was once more annexed to Piedmont. Deep-rooted separatist traditions bowed at length before the sentiment of nationality and the growing desire for unity. Milan now voluntarily abandoned her claim to be an independent State. Hence Austria's recognition of the annexation at Villafranca, while it forms but an episode in the Italian War, brings the history of Milan to its natural close. From henceforth the Duchy of Milan ceased to exist as a political unit. Her destinies were merged in those of the nascent Kingdom of Italy, which she had helped to bring into being.

¹ Bolton-King, vol. i., p. 263.



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APPENDIX

LETTERS FROM MASSIMILIANO SFORZA TO FRANCESCO II. CONCERNING THE MORONE CONSPIRACY

I. *From Amboise, 16th August, 1526.* “Mi ha mandato a dire che dipoi che he stata al castello io ho procurato di farmi duca de Milano et pero ch’io sia certo che fin che vive non sero mai nè duca de Milano nè Cardinale, io in niuno tempo dipoi sono in Franza cercai nè procurai esser duca de Milano perche havria fatto contra quello che gia promisi al Re Cristianissimo, mio Signore. Circa a lo esser Cardinale, io sono homo et li homini si fanno Cardinali.

“Nè si pensi V. S. ch’io tenghi il dir suo profetia et che non sapia che in lei non è poter de far cio che dice perche non è nè papa nè re de franza et come Francesco Sforza et io come Maximiliano non mi potra nè sforzar nè inganar mai perche la persona sua non vale piu della mia ancora fusse sana, che Dio volesse, nè ha piu amici de me, io ho bono patrone et ho tanti amici como lei et spero di giorno in giorno acquistarne de altri mi dubito bene se non muta costume che quelli che ha gli perdera. Et se pare che al presente la fortuna l’aiuti piu de me quella medesima si potrebbe mutar et far il contrario come altre volte V. S. ne ha visto experientia che io comandava et lei m’ubidiva. Sera adunche di lei et di me quello che a Dio piacera et non a V. S.

“Prometto nondimeno a V. S. che dove li potro giovar et monstar segni di cordiale fratello io lo faro, perche il sangue cosi vuole et di bonissima voluta pregando nostro Signore Dio gli doni quello chel suo cor desidera non essendo pero in danno di chi mal non li vole. De V. S. hobediente fratello.

“Maximiliano.”

II. On 24th August, 1526, Massimiliano acknowledges a message from Francesco “che si pente d’haver creso quello che altre volte ha creso di mi perche si è chiarita all’ contrario”.

III. "Illmo et Exmo Sigre fratello mio Cordmo. Ho receputo una de V. S. responsiva ad una mia et se quel cor che comando a la mano che scrivesse fu cosi sincero como la mano ad ubidire dico che io sono il piu contento homo che viva, perche, dipoi il Re Cristianissimo mio Signore, niuna cosa piu desidero che lo amore et bona gratia sua de laquale spero ne debbia reuscir la quiete totale del corpo et animo mio, quale corpo sempre si exponera ad periculo di perdersi per V. Ex. et per tutta la casa de laquale possiamo tutti confessare lei esser il principale per esser in magior dignita constituta. Rengratio V. Ex. quanto piu di core posso di questo mi ha scripto et certamente io so che merito che mi ami perche non feci mai nel tempo che havuto di me suspecto salvo quello che convenia a uno amorevole et cordiale fratello. Vero he che io feci poco perche piu ultra non se extendevano le debile forze mie et serano de questo, se loro piaceva, la Santita di nostro Signore et la Illma Signoria testimonii,¹ a quelli debitamente debe prestar fede. Nè mi pento di cio ch'io feci, mi doglio non haver potuto far asai piu perche sono cosi per molte ragione obligato. Pregola ad continuar d'amarmi ch'io il medesimo faro et cosi causaremo ali amici nostri consolatione et ali inimici affanno et cordoglio.

"V. Ex. mi prega voglii haver il Signore Joanne Paulo² nostro comune fratello per raccomandato. Piacessi a Dio ch'io fussi in esser tale ch'io lo dovessi haver per raccomandato, perche miglioraria (?) asai di conditione, posso bene amarlo et desiderare de farli piacer et cosi ne ho certo volonta et farolo dove potro sempre come per un altro mi medesimo come io lo tengho et teni di continuo dipoi uscite del putto. Io non rispondo ad ogni particularita de la sua perche non voglio intrar piu nei cose fastidiose, pentomi delle passate et gia sono tutte dimenticate dal canto de chi scrive cosi prego facii dal suo. Ludovico Carpano con la solita prudentia et dexterita sua supplira a bocca a quello si manco nel scriver al qual me rimetto et a lei di bono cor me raccomando. In Bles a 28 settembre 1526. De V. S. bono et cordiale fratello.

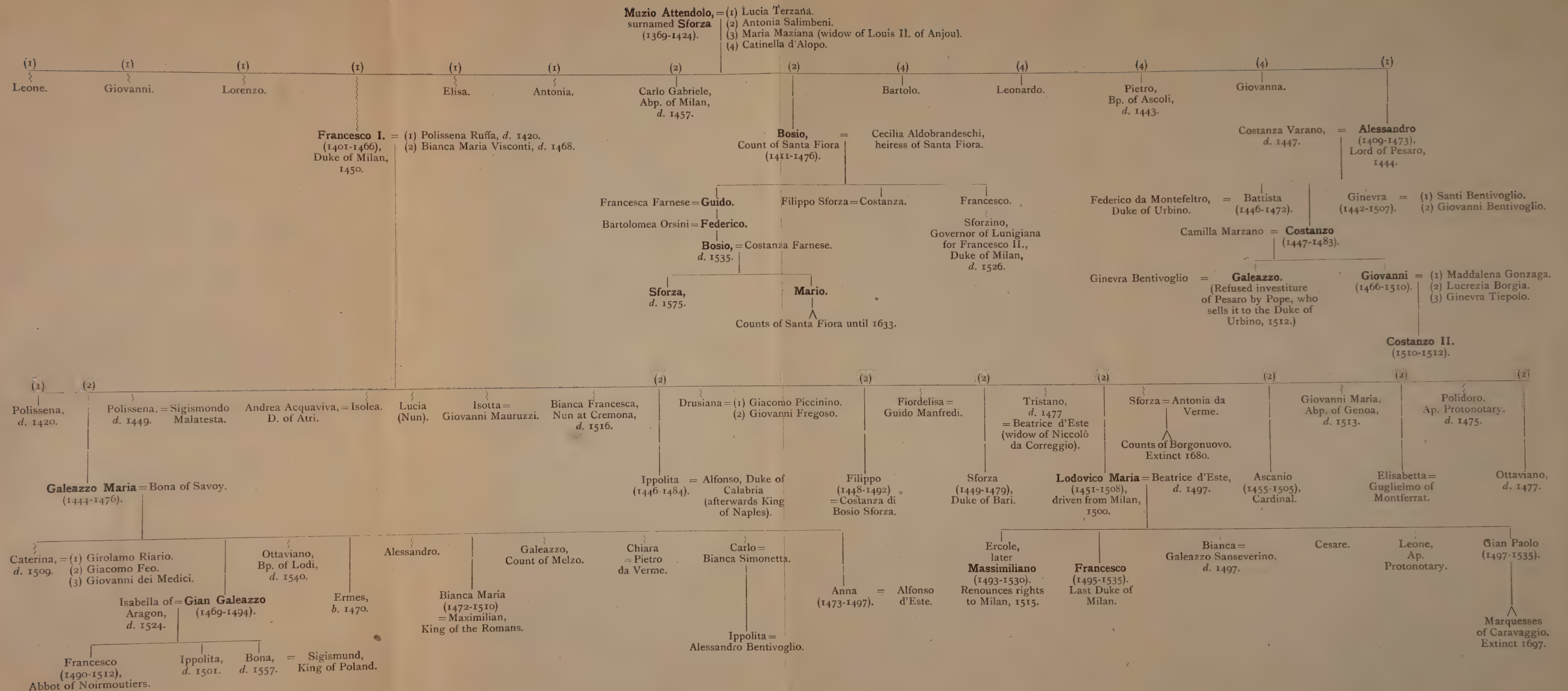
"Maximiliano."

(Archivio di Stato di Milano, Potenze Sovrane, Massimiliano, Vicende personali.)

¹ *I.e.*, Pope Clement VII. and the Venetian Republic who proposed the invitation to Massimiliano.

² Gian Paolo Sforza, Marquis of Caravaggio.

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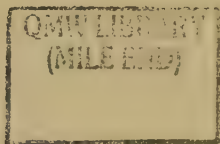
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